REMEMBERING JANETTE CARTER by RAYMOND McLAIN

NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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FAMILY MATTERS

SAGO

By FRED SAUCEMAN

ISSA YOUSEF MAÁYEH'S APPALACHIAN JOURNEY

By CAMELLIA MAYA

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FITTING IN

Outsiders in a Rural Mountain Community

By FRED CARLISLE

Appalachia's
rich history
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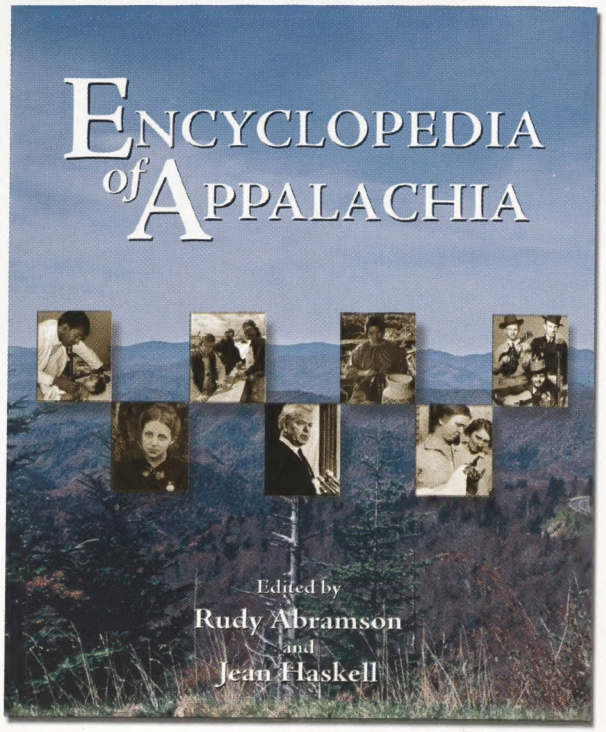
in one
indispensable guide



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NOW&THEN
THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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A FAMILY SNAPSHOT

By ROBERTA HERRIN
CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES
DIRECTOR

Each December, I look forward to the family photographs that adorn and accompany holiday greeting cards. Each photograph is a snapshot in time. From year to year, daughters marry, sons go off to work in distant places, grandchildren appear. The face of the family changes and shifts; faces themselves age, new family members appear, some disappear altogether. The same is true for the workplace: In 2005-2006 the CASS family portrait and the family home have changed significantly.

First, Jack Tottle, who single-handedly built the Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music program, has opted to live in Hawaii from January through mid-August every year and teach during the fall semesters only. (Imagine that!) In October, we held a celebration to honor Jack's achievements and to dedicate the Jack Tottle Bluegrass Music Suite in Memorial Hall. Faculty, administrators, students, and friends gathered outside on a beautiful autumn day for hot dogs and good music, with expressions of gratitude and best wishes for Jack.

Our family photographs won't be quite the same without Jack's face, but we've hired a part-time replacement, Kristin Benson, and we're searching for a full-time Bluegrass faculty member, who should be in place by August 2007.

Our newest face in the CASS family is Theresa Burchett-Anderson, who joins us as director of the Carroll Reece Museum. She comes from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, but she is a native of Lee County, Virginia, specifically the Lone Branch Community of Flatwoods. She attended Berea College, and while earning a bachelor's degree in Appalachian Studies, she got her first taste of museum and curatorial work in Berea's Appalachian Cultural Museum. She was hooked. While earning her master's degree in Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University, she went to the Smithsonian for her graduate internship; they liked her so much, they kept her. Theresa says that she and her husband, Kimo Anderson, loved the Washington, D.C., area, but they missed the mountains: "We feel as if we are coming home. I am honored to be entrusted with the material culture of Northeast Tennessee and the Appalachian Region."

New CASS family members Theresa Burchett-Anderson and Randy Sanders. Photos by Jim Sledge, ETSU Photo Lab.

Randy Sanders is another new face in the CASS family portrait; he joins the Cen-

ter as coordinator of marketing and public relations and managing editor of *Now & Then* magazine. For the past six years, Randy has been working in Jonesborough, Tennessee, first as director of the Jonesborough/Washington County History Museum, then as executive director of the Heritage Alliance of Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia. Frankly, the Jonesborough community now views CASS as a "corporate raider" for having taken one of its brightest and best. Randy is a seventh-generation Northeast Tennessean and the proud father of one daughter, Moss. Although born in Johnson City, Randy left Tennessee as a young boy—living a transient life as an "Army brat." A graduate of ETSU, Randy says that in joining CASS he feels that he is "finally home for good."

"Home" for part of the CASS family is about to change. For many years the center's main office was located in cramped quarters in the basement of Sherrod Library. When the new library was built, the old library building was closed for renovations, and the CASS administrative offices were moved "temporarily" to 209 Warf-Pickel Hall. That temporary move stretched to seven years, but the renovation is finally complete, and the main offices will be moving back to newly-renovated space on the second floor. We are delighted to be in the original 1930s section of the building, adjacent to the Reece Museum, with an entrance facing the end of Gilbreath Hall, surrounded by ancient, spreading trees. It will be nice to have the administrative offices located in a space more central to the other units of CASS—Archives, Museum, and Bluegrass.

In addition to a suite of offices, the center will have—for the first time—a reception area and a formal conference room. There is a multi-purpose room that will seat approximately one hundred, and it can be configured for small groups as well. It will be fully equipped for media presentations and can accommodate receptions, breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. A new dark room and a media suite are designed to support all of CASS, including the Archives and the Museum.

Our new home affords the prospect of a state-of-the-art bluegrass recording laboratory. Once equipped, it would support an expanded curriculum for Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music, offering students the opportunity to learn about the recording industry and technology. And on top of all this, the family gets new furniture and new digital telephones.

As soon as the move is complete, an open house will be held to celebrate our good fortune and our new family members. We plan to pose for a family photograph on the steps of our new home in the shade of an old tree, and next December it will adorn our holiday greeting card. ❖

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

By FRED SAUCEMAN

Chris Maya loved the smell of new leather boots and the thwack a pile of blue jeans made when he threw them on the table of his dry goods store. His was not the typical trek to Appalachia. It didn't start in the Scottish highlands or the Rhineland. Instead, it began in Jordan, coursed through Palestine, and eventually led to the county of Scott, in the mountains of Southwest Virginia, where he clothed a county, in denim and cowhide and crinoline.

His path intersected often with Janette Carter's there in Scott County. While Chris dressed the people of the county at a downtown store, Janette serenaded them at the foot of Clinch Mountain. The daughter of country music demigods A.P. and Sara Carter and this son of the Middle East died just days apart in early 2006. We remember them, as *Now & Then* honors the Appalachian family.

Once the reporters had cleared out and the funerals were over, I spent two quiet days among the people of Upshur County, West Virginia, to examine how the explosion at the Sago mine affected one family—a husband who made it out of the mine that dreadful day when 2006 was just a few hours old and his wife who couldn't rejoice about it because her brother's life had slipped away in the darkness.

Four stories in this issue explore themes of family in an architectural framework. A retired university administrator cuts through what one native called the "Ph.D. pollution" of Newport and Clover Hollow by building a farmhouse in Virginia. In North Carolina, the Big House is a symbol of a family's one hundred-year-old struggle to keep a farm where pigs and chickens still graze. Noted writer Ronni Lundy takes us through Silvy Nett's homeplace in Southwest Virginia, a house without a front porch because its octogenarian inhabitant had no time for leisure. And in Tennessee, a young couple thrives in a 400-square-foot cabin.

Jill Oxendine describes, firsthand, what it was like to assemble the massive and monumental *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*. *Now & Then* managing editor Randy Sanders and I have added a permanent section on music to the magazine, turning new music editor Wayne Winkler loose on the trail of singer Reagan Boggs. Likewise, I'm editing a new section on food, and in this issue, we swig a caffeinated ginger drink made in Winchester, Kentucky, for eighty years.

Attending the 2006 Appalachian Studies Conference in Dayton, Ohio, we learned quickly how people across the region value this magazine. Staffing has changed, but we've kept *Now & Then* in the family. We'll polish it here and there, just like we'd touch up a Jackson Press or a bonnet chest at home. We'll fix a few nicks, shine a surface, and dust up a bit. But you'll still know it, as the Appalachian Magazine it's always been. ❖

RECKONING

By MARILOU AWIAKTA

The Cherokees' whole concept, philosophically, is family, and the teaching is that everything in the universe is family. And so familial terms were used like Grandmother Sun, Brother Moon. Grandmother Corn or the Corn Mother was the designation for the natural law that the Creator put in the corn and into everything living. Selu with a big S is the Corn Mother, and selu with a little s is the grain. It was intended with all American Indians who gave the Europeans corn that they would have the grain and the story and access to the wisdom that the plant teaches. In the Book of Job it says ask the birds and the plants and the fish and they will teach you, for the Creator made them all. And in our industrial and electronic age, we've gotten very far from remembering that watching nature teaches us laws about living and balance and harmony and the cycles of life. We speak of the Corn Mother in familial terms, not as a goddess, which is Western and removed from the family concept. ❖

Marilou Awiakta, Cherokee, Appalachian, poet, storyteller, speaking with the editor, Oxford, Mississippi, October 5, 2003. Photo by Larry Smith, ETSU Photo Lab.

REMEMBERING JANETTE CARTER

By RAYMOND W. McLAIN

Editor's note: Janette Carter, the last surviving child of country music pioneers A.P. and Sara Carter, died in Kingsport, Tennessee, early on Sunday morning, January 22, 2006, at age eighty-two, less than a year after the death of her brother Joe.

In 1974, the first time Janette Carter asked my family to come perform in the building that had been her father's store, I felt as if we had been invited to play music in the grandest place on earth. We went back twice a year as long as The McLain Family Band toured, until 1990, and then did many reunion concerts until the present day. Although my father, Raymond K. McLain, was pleased to play music on many stages from Carnegie Hall to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and in some sixty-seven countries around the world, he always maintained that The Carter Fold in Hiltons, Virginia, was his favorite place to perform.

Like so many musicians and friends, I will be empowered for the rest of my life because Janette Carter believed in me. I always did what she told me to do. Sometimes this began with a tug on my coattail as I stood on stage at the Carter Fold. "Try to do a dance tune next." Or, "Could you sing a gospel song?" Sometimes it was advice about a life decision. Her counsel came from experience and wisdom born of faith and love. She treated everyone like that. When she was presented to former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, she smiled sweetly and said, "Hello, honey, how are you?"

Janette tried to do what she was supposed to do. She listened to her father and all her family and she listened when she prayed. Her faith was strong.

Balanced with the responsibilities of raising her family, Janette had a charge to keep, a promise she made to her father, A.P. Carter, when he was near death. She told her father, arguably the greatest composer and arranger in country music history, that she would keep the family's music alive—the songs he had

Janette Carter as a little girl. All photos courtesy Carter Family Museum, Maces Spring, Virginia.

gathered in the Southwest Virginia hills, sung so memorably by Janette's mother Sara and accented by her Aunt Maybelle's guitar licks.

The Carter Family changed country music to the same extent that Elvis Presley shaped rock and roll and the Beatles revolutionized pop music in the 1960s and 1970s. The Carters set the pattern for all the country music that has come after—music sung from the heart with instrumental solos, story songs, love songs, church songs with rhythmic accompaniment.

Janette Carter started her life in a country home at the foot of beautiful Clinch Mountain in Virginia. Before she was fifteen, she had moved with her family to Texas, sung on radio that was broadcast all over the world, and was part of an exploding new entertainment business.

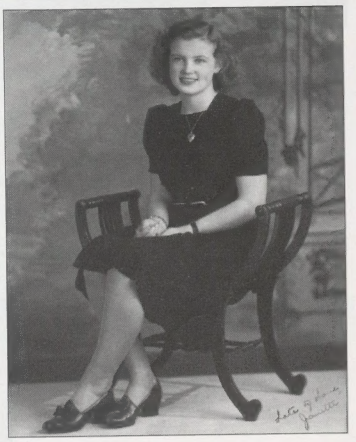
If you asked every guitar picker who has learned country guitar in the last sixty years to name the first tune they ever played, a large percentage would say "The Wildwood Flower." And most of them pattern their arrangement after the original Carter Family recording.

I'm sure it was difficult for Janette, at fifteen, to go from worldwide stardom back to Virginia to care for her father and sister and brother. Even though she performed and recorded over a hundred songs with her father and mother in the 1950s, for the rest of her life, she lived without the riches that sometimes are perceived to accompany the sort of success the Carter Family achieved. Instead, she led a life of grace and humility.

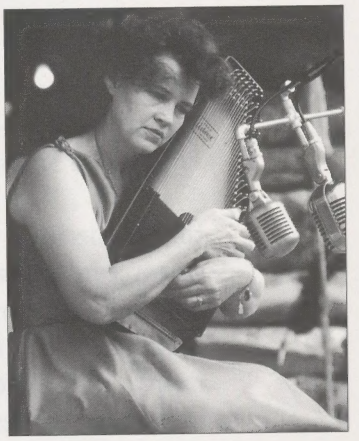
Janette's life experiences gave her reason to feel embittered, but she was a loving person to the end. To be near her was to feel a bit of that Carter Family magic.

When the 1960s came and her father passed on, Janette made good on her promise. She started performing, sometimes solo and sometimes with her brother, Joe Carter. They sang the strong Carter Family material, wrote new songs in the old tradition, and entertained with inspiration. The first time Janette played the autoharp on stage was during a music festival at East Tennessee State University.

In the early 1970s, Janette started presenting old time musical performances in the building where her father had run a country store. She and Joe played, and they invited many of their friends from the world of country music. The audience, many of them related to her, came from close by, but word soon spread and before long, the store building became too small to hold the ever-increasing audience.



Joe and a family friend or two built a music hall in the style of a tobacco barn. On pretty nights, people sat on the grassy hillside, since the walls could be opened or closed when weather warranted.



Every Saturday night for the next thirty years, with only a few exceptions for health reasons or to make some prestigious appearance elsewhere, she opened the show: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the old time music at the Carter Family Fold."

Accolades did come to Janette. In 1985 she joined Ella Fitzgerald and Gregory Peck to receive the Governor's Arts Award from Virginia Governor George Allen. In 1990, she performed at the inauguration of Virginia Governor Douglas Wilder. In 2004,

Janette Carter signed this studio portrait, "Lots of Love."

Janette Carter performs at the Galax, Virginia, Fiddlers Convention, 1968.

she accepted a special lifetime achievement Grammy Award on behalf of the Carter Family, given by the Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. Months before her death, Janette went to Washington, D.C., to receive the National Heritage Award. And, there is a Janette Carter Emergency Financial Assistance Endowment at Mountain Empire Community College in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, which helps needy students stay in school.

It was not because she had wealth or power that she was able to contribute so much to the legacy of old-time mountain music. It was because she had purpose and determination—and because she made a promise. ❖

Special thanks to Freddie Boyd at Bryant Label for assistance with the Carter photos.

Raymond W. McLain is the director of the ETSU Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Program. A dynamic performer of traditional and original Bluegrass music, he has performed in sixty-seven countries from stages including Carnegie Hall and the Grand Ole Opry. Long a mainstay of the renowned McLain Family Band, Raymond performs and records with Canadian harmonica virtuoso, Mike Stevens.

Janette Carter and her brother Joe performed together every Saturday night at The Carter Fold. They died less than a year apart.

Faith

By JUDY LOEST

Leaves drift from the cemetery oaks like flaking rust
Onto the late grass, sun-singed, smelling like straw.
The stone angel prays, oblivious to the sleeping
Vagrant at her feet, a lone squirrel, furtive amid the litter.

My great-grandmother, on the day she died,
Rose from her bed where she had lain, paralyzed and mute
For two years following a stroke, and dressed herself—the good
Sunday dress of black crepe, cotton stockings, sensible lace-up shoes.

I imagine her coiling her long white braid in the silent house,
Lying back down on top of the quilt and folding her hands,
Satisfied. I imagine her born-again daughters, brought up
In that tent-revival religion, reassured by the seasons, called in
From kitchens and fields to stand dumbfounded by her bed
Like the daughters of Lazarus, waiting for her to breathe,
To rise again and tell them what to do.

Here, no cross escapes the corrosion of age, no voice breaks
The silence; the only certainty in the crow's flight
Or the sun's measured descent is the coming of winter;
Even the angel's outstretched arms offer a formulated
Grace, her blind blessings as indiscriminate as acorns,
Falling on each of us, the departed and the leaving.

Born in Snowflake, Virginia, Judy Loest earned her master's degree in English from the University of Tennessee in 1998. Her honors include the 2004 James Still Poetry Award and the 2004 Olay/Poetry Society of America Fine Lines Poetry Contest. She finds much of her poetic inspiration in cemeteries.

ON YOUR OWN
The "Chucky Clan" Living off the Grid

By STANFORD DAILEY

Rachel and Chris Lennon are a lot like other young, recently wed couples in America. They met at work. They are both struggling college students closing in on their degrees, and they would like to have a family someday. But this is where the "typical" ends.

Rachel and Chris live deep in the woods of Unicoi County, Tennessee, in a 400-square-foot cabin along the banks of the Nolichucky River; nestled in the shadows of the Unaka Mountains in an area the locals call the "Valley Beautiful."

The place, which resembles a summer camp from a movie, is located in a heavily wooded area adjacent to the Cherokee National Forest. But this is no part-time summer residence for the young couple. It's where they live year round. They do so not out of economic necessity but by choice. "I've stayed here because I feel like I belong in these mountains—they're home," says Rachel. "I couldn't imagine being anywhere else."

Their "neighborhood" consists of an eclectic hodgepodge of structures, various sizes and shapes nestled in the woods. Small, summer-type cabins, tents perched on permanent wooden platforms, travel trailers, motor homes, a mess hall, two outpost buildings owned by a whitewater rafting company, a couple of bathhouses and various storage buildings for rafts and gear.

The self-proclaimed reclusive couple lives among a small group of twenty or so people who, over a period of years, have formed a sort of communal niche.

Rachel and some of her other raft guide friends jokingly refer to themselves as the "Jones Branch Dividiots," a nod to the

The 400-square-foot Lennon cabin, Unicoi County, Tennessee. Photo by Stanford Dailey.

way they think they're viewed by some locals and a reference to the location of their "compound," where the Jones Branch Creek meets the Nolichucky.

The nearest bathroom is about one hundred yards away. "That's no big deal," says the twenty-four-year-old Rachel, who grew up in Bluff City, Tennessee. Neither is going outside to fetch water from an old-fashioned manual pump. "In a way I feel more akin to the Amish folk. While I might not understand their doctrine, I understand their simpler lifestyle and why they'd want to live that way. More complicated is not better."

Rachel's life here began as a river guide in the spring of 2000. Her then future-husband Chris, now thirty-two, was one of the first people she met at the outpost that first year. When Rachel came on board as a trainee, Chris, originally from Eastern North Carolina, was an assistant manager for a whitewater rafting company on the Nolichucky as well as a river guide himself with more than five years' worth of paddling experience. He helped train her. They remained friends from the beginning. Their relationship grew over the past three years and they were married in October of 2005.

Just three credit hours shy of a degree in Wildlife Management Biology, Chris chose another career route and is now just one year away from finishing paramedic's school, in addition to being a full-time intermediate emergency medical technician in Carter County, Tennessee. And Rachel is finishing up her freshman year at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City.

Chris got involved in rafting after deciding in 1995 to move to Waynesville, in Western North Carolina, to pursue a degree at Haywood College. His move to the remote school in the Smoky Mountains was driven, in part, by what he calls "a bad acid trip." He had become very anti-social and reclusive, but while attending Haywood, he says, he met a wonderful lady who made a powerful impact on his life.

This woman's husband was managing a whitewater rafting outpost on the nearby Nantahala River, and she talked Chris into taking a summer job there as a river guide.

And, his life has never been the same. "I met my three best friends in the world that summer," Chris says. In fact all three of them were in his and Rachel's wedding ceremony at the "Beauty Spot," a special, panoramic place to them along the Appalachian Trail outside Erwin, Tennessee, 4,500 feet above sea level.

With business slow on the Nantahala one spring, Chris came up to Erwin to work the Nolichucky. It's fairly common in the river guide industry to float back and forth working different rivers. Depending on river conditions and the seasons, you go where the work is. The rafting community is a transient society. During the off-season, many guides make the transition to snow skiing or horseback riding to make ends meet.

"In the river community you have two sorts of people," Chris explains. "You have the ones who come in and do it a little bit while they're in college for a year or two, then they move on, and then you have the people for whom it becomes their life, and they continue to paddle for the rest of their lives." Chris and Rachel see themselves as the latter.

The small, simple cabin the couple now calls home is a far cry from how they lived in their early days on the river, in what they referred to as "tent city." With several other people who worked the river, they would set up their tents and create a base of operations right up from the outpost alongside the Appalachian Trail.

"I lived out in the woods, yeah, out like that, pre-electricity, from March to October of 2000," Rachel says. Her next two years were spent living in an old converted school bus on the river, complete with a little pot-bellied stove for heat, but still with no electricity or running water.

From the days when she was playing in the woods as a young girl near her home at

the foot of Holston Mountain, she has always felt a special connection with the highlands. "There's something peaceful about the mountains that I think we've lost, that I think we don't grasp, something we've stolen from ourselves."

She and Chris have found a sense of community here at the "Chucky" and, without a doubt, a special camaraderie. "I suppose we're sort of clannish, and, yes, we are very protective of each other and our home. Folks who have come snooping around or who are snobbish and judgmental toward us have a tendency not to stick around long," Rachel says.

Every Sunday night the neighbors and assorted friends have a potluck dinner in the old mess hall. It has a stove, sink, refrigerator, and long wooden picnic tables. Afterwards for those who are interested, one of the residents plays a weekly movie free of charge on a big projector screen. One week, his selection for the night was *Crazy*, a classic starring Dudley Moore.

The tiny cabin Chris and Rachel are renting is just fine by them, even with no running water, no bathroom, and, up until this year, only a wood-burning stove for heat. The owners are considering enclosing the front porch and adding on a bathroom and a fully functional kitchen. Rachel doesn't fully embrace the "improvements."

"I really like my open air porch. I'm not so sure I would want to give it up."

And when asked by her new mother-in-law if she wished Chris would get them out of the cabin and into a real home, Rachel replied, "No, not really." For Rachel and Chris, this is a real home. ❖

Stanford Dailey was raised in Kennesaw, Georgia, where General Sherman stopped to pitch a battle on his march to the sea. Stanford graduated from Sprayberry High School in Marietta, with classmate Travis Tritt.

An Army veteran, former installation mechanic in the heating-ventilation-air-conditioning industry, and avid canoeist, he is now fulfilling a lifelong dream of getting a college education, as a student at East Tennessee State University.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

On Dry Branch Road in the Martin's Creek section of Erwin, Tennessee, the Riddle family gathers in the woods around the new Victrola in preparation for a dance. James Marion Riddle, with moustache and large hat, traded his fiddle for the sound machine. Photo courtesy Kenneth Riddle.

THE BIG HOUSE

By SARAH THOMAS

Anyone who's driven winding US 74-A from Asheville to Chimney Rock in North Carolina has certainly noticed the sprawling Sherrill's Inn situated halfway up a switchback mountain at the top of a long, sloping meadow. What travelers may not realize, however, is that "The Big House," as it's known locally, is the central figure in a century-long effort to bring forth good things from the rocky land.

The Big House. Photo by Renato Rotolo.

Jim and Elizabeth

Perched on a hay wagon in his family's farmyard with sheep bleating and pigs snorting nearby, Jamie Ager talks animatedly about his family's history—something that's obviously important to him. He tells how his great-grandparents, Jim and Elizabeth McClure, came to Fairview, North Carolina, on their honeymoon from Chicago in 1916. The northern newlyweds discovered Sherrill's Inn, built around 1834, and even though it wasn't for sale, persuaded the owner to lease it to them with an option to buy.

The property included a cabin that had been incorporated into the main house as a study, complete with hidden door, and a smokehouse that is the oldest structure in Buncombe County, both built soon after the land was originally purchased in 1797. Elizabeth, an artist, took over the house and gardens. Her paintings of the inn, originally built for drovers, adorn the walls of a parlor on the front of the house, and her elegant artwork hangs in almost every room. Outside, boxwoods outline garden spaces and pathways, belying the property's history as a farm.

While Elizabeth made herself at home at the inn, Jim, a Presbyterian minister, began work on his vision for the land and the farm. According to McClure's biography, *We Plow God's Fields*, written by his grandson-in-law John Ager, he had set his 1918 farm production goals to "three to four thousand bushels of corn, two hundred bushels of wheat and rye, one thousand bushels of apples, five hundred potatoes and fifty pigs." He wasn't satisfied, however, to focus on the produce of his own land, and in 1920, he organized the Farmers Federation, a co-op of local farmers.

McClure's intent in organizing the Farmers Federation was to raise the hardscrabble mountain farmers up into profitability. The

farmers had several obstacles to overcome. First, their land was generally poor and unimproved. Second, supplies, including fertilizer and tools, were expensive and often hard to come by. And third, farmers typically harvested their produce at the same time, flooding the market and driving prices down. McClure intended the federation to address all these issues.

By November of 1920, the federation could count 150 members and had its first warehouse along the Southern Railroad tracks between Fairview and Asheville. A second warehouse was built in 1921 on the other side of Asheville, and in 1922 the farmers rented a third. Progress was driven largely by Jim McClure's charm and ability to sell stocks to such luminary Asheville residents as Edwin W. Grove, owner of Grove Park Inn, and Edith Vanderbilt, the widow of Biltmore Estate owner George W. Vanderbilt.

By 1924 the Farmers Federation had six warehouses located in Buncombe County and neighboring Henderson County. According to *We Plow God's Fields*, the federation saw total sales of nearly $1 million annually in 1925. Within ten years, McClure could look back and see that his plan had been decidedly successful. John Ager wrote, "By 1930, the Federation was financially strong and just beginning to tap resources in the North, and to expand operation into new areas of mountain life. Jim McClure's dream of ministering to a region rather than just a church had been fulfilled...."

Jamie and Elspeth

The second generation to make Hickory Nut Gap and the Big House their home was Jamie Clarke, Jim and Elizabeth McClure's nephew, and their daughter, Elspeth McClure. Although first cousins, the couple married in 1944 and spent their honeymoon on the farm.

As a youth Jamie spent quite a bit of time at Hickory Nut Gap with his aunt and uncle. Following his graduation from Princeton University in 1939, he went to work in the Hendersonville Federation warehouse as a store clerk. Within a year, he left the warehouse to become editor of the *Farmers Federation News*. Then, in February 1942, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Jamie joined the U.S. Navy. Following Elspeth's graduation from Vassar College in 1944, she applied to WAVE Officers Training School and was accepted. She and Jamie managed to get leave later that year and were married.

As soon as the war was over, the young couple hurried home to Hickory Nut Gap and moved into a cottage on the farm. There, Jamie went back to work for the federation, and he and Elspeth soon began introducing the third generation to The Big House. Following his father-in-law's death in 1956, Jamie was elected president of the Farmers Federation. The times were changing, however, and the need for a cooperative venture was fading. Within ten years, the Farmers Federation ceased to be, but Jamie, Elspeth, and their eight children carried on the farming tradition. A dairy was added and the orchards continued to produce.

Jamie hired out much of the work on the farm while he went on to serve as editor of the Sunday *Asheville Citizen-Times* and associate editor of the daily *Citizen*. He eventually served in the North Carolina state legislature for three terms and then the United States Congress—always with Elspeth by his side. Jamie passed away in 1999 and Elspeth followed in 2001, leaving The Big House to the third generation of farmers.

John and Annie

Today the land—about 600 acres of it—belongs jointly to the six remaining children of Jamie and Elspeth Clarke. But if you pull into the drive at The Big House,

it's Annie—their second daughter—and her husband John Ager you'll meet. Annie and John largely managed the farm through the 1990s with cows, sheep, and the ever-present Hickory Nut Gap apple stand catering to travelers on their way to or from Chimney Rock Park. The farm includes ten acres of apple trees in twenty-seven varieties that keep the stand running throughout September and October each year. Annie's true love, however, has long been her horses. She has a herd of twenty-four and uses them to give lessons and run summer horseback riding camps on the farm.

In the 1980s, Annie's husband John tackled the job of writing his grandfather-in-law's biography. In 1991, the Appalachian Consortium Press in Boone, North Carolina, published *We Plow God's Fields: The Life of James G.K. McClure*, offering readers a unique insight into life at Hickory Nut Gap Farm and in The Big House.

Jamie and Amy

Today, there are several agricultural operations run by fourth-generation descendants of Jim and Elizabeth McClure on or near the original farm. William Hamilton operates a sawmill while Annie Louise and Isaiah Perkinson grow vegetables and sell eggs. And Jamie and Amy Ager are staking their future on maintaining Hickory Nut Gap Farm as a profitable enterprise that can see another four generations making their way on the land. Their business, Spring House Meats, focuses on offering consumers pasture-raised beef, lamb, chicken, and pork.

"We raise animals in their natural outdoor environment," said Jamie. "Pigs in the woods, cows on pasture eating grass and clover, multiple species grazing together, drinking clean spring water and living the good life."

Jamie earned a degree in sustainable agriculture and history at Warren Wilson College in nearby Swannanoa. While there, two very important things happened to steer him toward his current career. He met Joel Salatin and visited his Polyface Farm in Swoope, Virginia, and he met another Warren Wilson student, Amy Frey, who would become his wife and business partner.

It was Salatin with his pastured poultry model who inspired Jamie to dream of a farm where he could pasture-raise a variety of animals, harvest them, and offer them directly to the consumer. Salatin began his program with pastured poultry and has gone on to develop models for cattle, pork, and rabbits. Salatin's sales began on-farm but have since grown to include home buyers' clubs in Maryland, restaurant accounts in Virginia, and sales all over the region via EcoFriendly Foods.

When talking about his visit to Polyface Farm, Jamie said, "I came away with a vision to ramp up the farm and direct-market to consumers. I'm passionate about grass-fed, beef-and-pasture-raised hogs, and there's a huge market for that here."

But no matter how passionate one man is, there's still the practical side of running a business. It was Amy, with her degree in environmental studies and a business minor, who could address practical issues like marketing, website development, accounting, and handling retail customers, and she's taken on that role enthusiastically.

Jamie and Amy graduated from Warren Wilson in 2000, married in 2001, and quickly got down to the business of developing Hickory Nut Gap Farm—Spring House Meats. It was hard work in the beginning. The farm infrastructure had deteriorated and there were a lot of fences to build and barns to shore up before animals could be introduced. Once things had been repaired, however, production proceeded fairly quickly.

With eighty acres in production, Jamie and Amy's 2005 harvest included thirty grass-finished beeves, eighty pigs (more than his great-grandfather planned to raise

in 1918), sixty to seventy lambs, and 350 chickens. Not to mention a whole lot of eggs. Their products are sold through a Farm Store on the property Thursday afternoons, at the North Asheville tailgate market throughout the summer, and at Asheville area retail stores like Greenlife Grocery, the French Broad Food Co-op, and Earth Fare. The Agers also deliver to local restaurants including Early Girl Eatery, The Marketplace Restaurant, Tupelo Honey, Over Easy Breakfast Café, Salsa, Table, and Laureys Catering. In addition, consumers can place bulk orders for pickup via the Agers' website at www.springhousemeats.com.

And the young entrepreneurs aren't stopping there. "We have good name recognition in Asheville," says Jamie. The couple plans to capitalize on that by expanding their pig and poultry operations (both sell out quickly), eventually contracting with other farmers in the area and trying their hand at agri-tourism in the fall of 2006. Amy has plans to build a corn maze, grow a pumpkin patch, and run programs for schoolchildren so they can learn about the land, farming, and sustainable agriculture.

Amy, a native of Louisville, Kentucky, and something of a "city girl," has found her new farm life ideal. In the couple's last semester of college, they developed a business plan that has helped move their dreams forward. When asked what she thought of her new life, which includes plenty of rough farm work like helping deliver lambs, Amy said, "It was the learning that made it enjoyable, that and the excitement of owning your own business and being an entrepreneur."

A sentiment Jim McClure could certainly appreciate as his farmer's spirit lives on in this fourth generation of descendants. And as Jamie and Amy's young son Cyrus toddles toward the sheep pen, laughing and jabbering to the animals, there's reason to believe that this nearly century-old family tradition will carry on for at least a fifth generation under the watchful façade of The Big House. ❖

Sarah Thomas is a native of French Creek, West Virginia, who now lives in Asheville, North Carolina, with her husband and three dogs. A public relations professional, she does freelance writing for several magazines and is director of development and public relations at the Presbyterian Home for Children in Black Mountain. She holds a B.A. degree in English from the University of South Carolina, Coastal Carolina College.

Amy, Jamie, and Cyrus at the Farm Store, Buncombe County, North Carolina. Photo by Renato Rotolo.

Heart Murmur

By ELAINE FOWLER PALENCIA

When Emily was born they said
I had a heart murmur.
Don't amount to a hill of beans, Doc said, You
won't have to worry for years.
Doc's been dead fifteen.

A private voice.
Whispering secrets.
Making jokes.
Telling the truth.
Maybe if I'd listened to it more
Things would have turned out different.
But there's more good in him than bad
And I've got Emily, two grandchildren,
And a great-grandbaby I won't live to see.

These days it sings and gurgles,
A gullywasher rising to drown me
In my own juices.
Take me to my people, it says.

Last night my brother Paul
Came all the way from Athens
To see me. That's where he's buried,
Next to sister Bonnie and her baby.
There's room for my ashes too
In the lots I paid for
When Bonnie died. It was the Depression
And I was the only one with a job.
You think this is Alzheimer's?
Not hardly.
If the dead don't visit you,
It's not your time yet.
Tick, tick, tick, tick.

I don't want a service,
Don't want people like Miss Ivy
Coming to gawk at me.
That woman likes a funeral
Better than a pan of brownies.
I just wish it'd told me
How fast time passes.
But I have no regrets, except
Not buying better furniture.
And maybe this:
When I was younger, Doc said
Down in Nashville was a doctor
Could fix it with a pig's valve;
But I didn't want to bother anybody.
Who would've fixed dinner for him
While I was laid up?
Oink, oink.

Elaine Fowler Palencia of Champaign, Illinois, grew up in Kentucky and Tennessee. She is the author of two collections of Appalachian short stories: *Small Caucasian Woman* and *Brier Country*. This year her poetry is also appearing in *Big Muddy* and *Spoon River Poetry Review*.

Who Can Say What Calls?

By CHARLES A. SWANSON

Sharply the sun scissors about my fingers,
Though I try to make a shade by angling hands
Like a cap's bill above my eyes. My man,
My son, reared here where I have long lingered,
Coming home. Your walk toward me mingles
Surreally your present, my past, our land
Of mutual bedazzled earth. I had not planned
This soil to ballad your heart like lost singers.
But you come, as the sun sets, bemusing me.
You walk as your kin, and I must strain to see
If this is you. You come as shadows dapple
And freckle the ground beneath the apple
Trees, trees which owe their sap to roots,
Trees which have this year set fruit.

Charles A. Swanson lives in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, at the foot of Turkeycock Mountain, and teaches creative writing and dual enrollment college English at Gretna High School. He won the 2005 James Still Award for Poetry given by the Appalachian Writers Association. He is an MFA candidate in poetry at Queens University and is working on a collection of poetic responses to the Old Testament Psalms.

SOME LIVING ROOM
East Tennessee, 1954-1955

By TAMARA BAXTER

It was time for a serious talk, my mother told me. I should know perfectly well by now that a white girl may not visit a Negro in his room. Mother said she would not tell me a second time. She pointed to a hickory switch that she kept on the top of the refrigerator. Mother never chose limber switches, but the thick unbending kind with rough knobs protruding. Mother said that I could knock at Silas's door and offer him the dessert that she baked for him each Sunday. I could talk to Silas outside in the light of day. I could even help him gather eggs, or pick apples. After all, he was eighty years old and suffered with arthritis. Nevertheless, Silas Mosely was a Negro, and on no account should I cross his threshold. "People talk about such things," Mother said.

Silas had lived in a shed attached to Mr. John Johnson's barn for nearly thirty years, working for Mr. John and his wife, Irma, for all that time. Mother had known Silas almost as long, and yet I sensed a mysterious fear in her warning about Negroes. I felt inwardly compelled to ignore her warning, partly because I didn't understand her fear, and partly because John and Irma Johnson lived on the hill just above our house. Silas's shed was exactly one hundred steps across the pasture and a duck under

the barbed wire fence. He had always been somewhere in my line of vision, working about the farm or walking down the road toward the river, but as he got older and more feeble, he stayed mostly inside the shed.

Silas never latched the shed door. I rushed headlong into his living quarters nearly every day that I didn't see him outside. Silas might be shelling out green peas, mending a horse harness, or sitting at his small table, his head bowed over a plate of pinto beans and onions. "This old nigger man got to sleep with his pants on and take a bath in his clothes, a youngon like you running in. Thank the Lord you come hollering. I hear you coming a mile off," Silas often said.

I'd come bounding inside, my hands filled with ferns I had picked in the woods, or a dirt dauber's nest, or a snake's skin, or a row of locust shells burred on my sweater sleeve, or pretty rocks that Silas laid on a shelf, or an enamel doorknob, or a rusted horseshoe, or some yellow flowers that he set in a snuff glass of water on his window ledge. Or, I just came to talk. Silas often fussed about my intrusions. "Youngon, you be coming where white folks ain't allowed."

One Sunday, after the serious talk, mother sent me to Silas's shed with a coconut pie. He met me at the door, but I shot past his long, thin legs, leaving him standing there with his empty hands outstretched toward a mirage of pie.

"Lordy. That youngon like a cat at the door," Silas said. I set the coconut pie daintily on the table and bounced down on a straight chair, carefully fanning the skirt of my pink crinoline dress across my knees.

"Well, I reckon you going to stay awhile," Silas muttered to himself and shut the door to keep out the flies. He went to a broken drawer and brought out a butter knife, picked up two saucers from an open shelf nailed above a cabinet, then sat in the chair at the corner of the table, his long, thin legs squared like two-by-fours in his khaki pants.

"It was good of your mama to send me some pie. I'm going down

East Tennessee, summer 1955: The author (right) with her sister Teena and father John. Photo courtesy Tamara Baxter.

and tell her my thanks," said Silas. He cut two slices of coconut pie, browned and sweet, licked the gum off the ends of his fingers in the way I have seen him rob a bite of honey comb from a bee hive he kept along the edge of the woods and eat it from his fingertips.

That Sunday afternoon as we were eating the pie, Mr. John came into Silas's shed, opening the wooden door silently. The only sound was the clinking of our forks against our plates. I knew that Mr. John's being inside the shed seemed wrong. Silas's room was his own territory. Mr. John had said himself that he went into Silas's shed for emergencies only, like the time his chicken house caught fire and he needed water buckets. I knew that Mr. John acted peculiar because of the Negro subject that Mama had warned me about.

Silas, to my knowledge, never went beyond Mr. John's porch. I knew this because in summertime when I was not in school and had no one to play with, I sneaked inside the shed in early morning. When the hands of Silas's pocket watch struck 7:00 a.m., he pulled his suspenders over his khaki shirt and walked directly to Mr. John's house. I witnessed the ritual between Silas and Mr. John on many occasions, Silas standing at the foot of the steps leading to a wide porch where tobacco bed netting kept the fly specks off Irma's white wicker chairs. Mr. John stood at the top of the steps plugging a pipe with tobacco while he talked. Silas mimicked Mr. John's lips and pulled his fingertips to keep track of his jobs. Silas sometimes forgot a job on his list, as he did on a Friday morning in the summer of 1954. Silas said, "Youngon, what was that number five job of work?"

I remembered Silas's list, for I had watched intently. I said, pulling my fingertips in Silas's way, "Mr. John says to take Mrs. Tremble's eggs to the store and sell them. She has nearly four dozen in a basket. She's down in her back this week."

Mr. John came inside Silas's shed on the Sunday after Silas had taken the eggs to the store, quietly opening the small door with leather hinges that Silas had fashioned from the tongues of old shoes. There were five or six of these leather tongues nailed up crooked, causing the door to swing lopsided. Silas often said that if everybody in the world had a tongue as quiet as a shoe's, the world would be a better place. Silas had just taken a bite of pie, when suddenly, there stood Mr. John outlined in the Sunday light. Suddenly, we both knew that something was wrong.

Silas scooted back the cane-bottomed chair he was sitting on and arose. Besides the meager light from the open door, some dingy light came in through a small window above a cabinet. On the cabinet, the white dots of a speckled enamel pan winked in the scarce light. Mr. John closed the door behind him. In the dimness both Mr. John and Silas wore the same dark faces, the stray light from the window playing at the curve of their chins and across their teeth.

At first Silas seemed agitated, and then he seemed confused. He shifted his feet toward Mr. John, and his blind hand felt for something solid to steady him. I could hear the words come quietly out of Silas's mouth, "What on earth?" Silas's breath hitched in his chest, the words caught like dry bread in his throat. When Silas tried to speak again, his quivering lips could not form words.

Mr. John walked several steps inside the shed, all the time kneading the brim of his hat. He did not speak directly, but looked about the shed. His eyes fell upon the horse collar hanging on the wall above Silas's cot, a hoe and a mattock in a corner, the sagging cot where Silas slept, his blankets neatly tucked under the mattress, and a small coal stove that Silas cooked on during the summer months as well. The room always stayed too warm and smelled like a potter's oven. The constant heat had cooked the red clay floor stone hard. Silas swept the earth floor with shocks of broom sage which he grew in the sass patch beyond the barn. Mr. John's eyes took in everything, even the cracked cup on a plank ledge below the window where Silas soaked his dentures with a drop or two of bleach.

Finally, he spied the table where I sat before my piece of coconut pie. Mr. John gave me only a passing glance, but since I feared he would send me home, I said, "My mother sent up some coconut pie for Silas and me to eat. My mother won't mind if you have a piece, too." Mr. John seemed not to hear me at all, but turned and spoke directly to Silas, whose long, lean body waved like a willow limb in the dim light.

"Did you give Mrs. Tremble her egg money Friday?"

"Yes sir." Silas felt inside his pants pockets. He drew up some change in the well of his hand, held it to the window, and raked the coins with his fingers. "This here is my money. I toted Missus Tremble's egg money in my left pocket." Silas patted his empty pocket.

"I talked to Mrs. Tremble at church today," said Mr. John. "Mrs. Tremble says she sent four dozen eggs to the store, and you didn't bring back all of her money."

"Yes Mr. John," said Silas. "Missus Roosevelt over at the store candled them eggs. She said some of them eggs be rotten and some of them eggs be pippin."

"Why didn't you bring the pippin eggs back and put them under the setting hen?"

"Well, that Missus Roosevelt throwed them eggs to her dogs."

"You got a tongue in your head. Why didn't you ask her for the eggs back?"

"I standing on the front porch. She throwed them eggs out the back door. Missus Roosevelt says I better not brang no rotten eggs to her store."

"Why didn't you tell Mrs. Roosevelt the eggs came from Mrs. Tremble?"

"Well, Mr. John. I reckon I didn't think on it that way."

"Mrs. Tremble's an old lady. She thinks you've done something wrong. She thinks she's owed some money. We'll have to work something out about paying that back."

After Mr. John left the shed, Silas sat down on the edge of his cot. His face drew up like a string purse.

"My mother will go and talk to Mrs. Roosevelt," I said. "She'll pay that egg money back."

"Lord, no. Don't you be mouthing a thing to Missus Roosevelt. Lord no," said Silas.

I never knew how Mr. John and Silas worked out Mrs. Tremble's egg money, just that afterwards Silas seemed upset, his face always pinched up in thought.

One fatal day late that summer I went inside Silas's shed to show him a big bullfrog that I had trapped beside the pond in my dress tail. Silas was uninterested in the biggest bullfrog on earth, and particularly its loud croaking. Not to be ignored, I turned the bullfrog loose on Silas's table, and it jumped smack into a pot of chicken and dumplings that had just come boiling off the stove. We hovered over the steaming pot studying the bullfrog as it struggled in the hell broth. Silas said if he'd wanted frog legs he'd have fried him some. He gigged the limp frog out of the gravy with his fork and pitched it out the open door. "Let the dogs have at it," he said. "I'm having some chicken."

"I'm going to catch another frog," I said. "A bigger one." Silas mumbled something as I left.

I saw my mother coming up the hill, brandishing her hickory switch. She had been sitting on our front porch talking to Irma and caught sight of my red gingham dress fluttering out the shed door. Mother said I might as well have been waving a flag at her. The switch stung my legs so bad my eyes watered up, but I refused to cry.

I never visited Silas Mosely in his shed after that day. I was even too afraid to speak to him. I did see him from time to time, away on the hill, hunched over his garden patch, or walking from the barn with a bucket of milk, or disappearing into the apple orchard above Irma's hen house.

Silas died in his sleep during the early spring of 1955. I watched from our front yard as several Negro men carried Silas to a hearse. Silas lay on the stretcher under a white sheet, the bumpy outline of his head, his crossed arms, his feet protruding underneath. Seeing the three Negro men dressed in white shirts and dark suits carrying him to the hearse made the whole world seem quiet and invisible.

Mama said to come inside out of the cold, and to stop staring at people. That was not polite. Later, I seemed to remember the forsythia was budding. There might have been some patches of snow in the shadow of the hill. Much later, it occurred to me that John and Irma Johnson were watching the Negroes from behind the porch railing at the same spot where Silas sometimes sat on the porch and watched the *Amos and Andy* show through the side window.

A few weeks after Silas died, Mr. John tore down the shed and burned the planks in the open pasture. Afterwards, he plowed up the hard red earth with much difficulty, and Irma planted a lettuce bed in the shade of the barn.

Mama declared that it was foolish to plant anything in that hard clay dirt, fallow for so many years. What on earth were John and Irma thinking? Nothing could grow there. Not ever. ❖

Tamara Baxter's short stories, poetry, and essays have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, and she is the recipient of several prizes in fiction. Her collection of short fiction, *Rock Big and Sing Loud*, was published by the Jesse Stuart Foundation Press in May 2006. *Some Living Room* earned a Rose Post Creative Nonfiction Award in 2001.

Salamander

By ANNA SUNSHINE ISON

Spring here is the smell of burning hillsides,
The sight of my father as cinder-footed silhouette
Standing in the valley with an oak branch,
A devil's foot, unpeeling a skin of ashes from the earth.

My father is the mythical salamander,
Hatched in fire to nest in farmed earth,
To burn away debris so crops can grow.
Eyebrows the color of coal and tobacco hands.

The night he returned from Vietnam,
The log house in which he was born
Became a Catherine wheel,
A morning-glory butterfly in motion.

All that we get, my cousins and I,
All that we've inherited of our parents' births,
Is a two-foot cellar depression behind my uncle's trailer
Where we light our miniature trash fires,
Throwing in bottles and belting hoodlum shouts.

In summer, he abandons us for a while on fire duty,
Our only connection, phone calls that smell of smoke
From camps farther to the cowboy West
Than I've ever seen.

My birthday is marked by too-dry grass in Utah,
By his battles with flaming parks on the Pacific
While we watch the national news for the sight of him
Trying to turn back time, to unlight lightning,
To uncreate the ruin of trees.

Whenever I swipe my father's jacket to walk at night
Or trudge out to get the mail, my pocket exploring brings
Items familiar, receipts, old candy, and always,
Always the smooth sweet square of matchbooks.

This, then, is where I get my flour-factory temper
My weepings and yellings, my chains of homemade bombs.
And how I write, too, forests burning,
Raking up leaves of events now bleached and igniting them.

Every spring the firetrucks arrive on our hills,
Routine, sirenless, centipeding the spine of spreading blackness.
"In control," we always tell them,
So they leave, their rearview mirrors flashing helicopters of smoke.

In spring we watch the detonation of brambles,
Martyred coral snakes of red and black and grey,
Dying on pyres to make room for the honeysuckle,
For our gardens and the sweet green of the horses.

Anna Sunshine Ison was raised in Rowan County, Kentucky, and has a master of fine arts in creative writing from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. A member of the Foreign Service, she is currently posted in Monterrey, Mexico, but will be moving to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in 2007. She is working on a book about Venezuelan beauty queens.

SAGO

By FRED SAUCEMAN

Archie and Cheryl Snyder had finished their coffee on Monday morning, January 2, 2006, but they hadn't yet turned on the television. The phone rang, and it was Brenda Koerner. She called pretty regularly about matters at the Good Hope Tabernacle, in the Adrian community, just below Buckhannon, West Virginia. But she usually didn't call this early. And it was odd to hear from her on a Monday. She and Cheryl had just talked at services the day before.

"We've had our first catastrophe of the year, and we need to start a prayer chain," Brenda told Cheryl. She said some miners were trapped at Sago, but that's all she knew.

It hadn't been two weeks since Archie had seen Junior Hamner down at the Kroger, and Junior had told him somebody was going to get killed up there at the Anker mine.

Cheryl and Archie knew just about everybody who worked at Anker, which had just been taken over by another company, ICG, January 1. Some of those miners were blood relatives of the Snyders. Cheryl and Archie didn't go down to the Sago Baptist Church that day like a lot of folks in Upshur County did. Instead, they felt they could do more good on the phone, seeking prayers from fellow parishioners.

Archie knew his third cousin, Casey Snyder, was supposed to be on the job that day, working the midnight crew. But a supervisor had called and changed the schedule, so Casey was safe at home.

Archie knew full well that he himself, an electrician and a certified mine boss, might have been checking the wiring in the Sago mine that morning, had it not been for a previous heart attack and five bypasses, which seemed, suddenly, a strange blessing.

Melba Black picked up the phone that Monday morning, too, and she was shaken. Her husband worked the mines, and she had called Josephine Linger, a clerk at Sago Baptist Church, to ask if the sanctuary and fellowship hall ought to be opened.

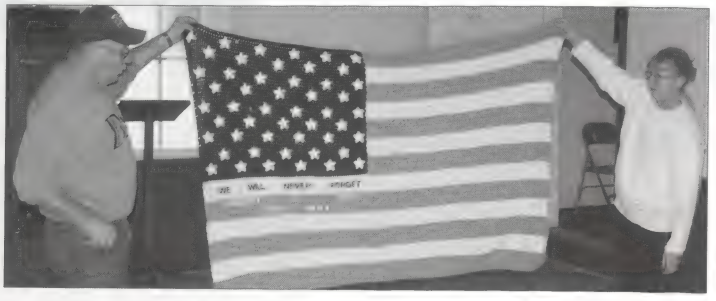
"It was about 9:00, and I opened up the doors and started coffee, thinking at that time it wouldn't be much," Josephine told me a little over a month later, as she and her husband Ron, a church trustee, cleaned the fellowship hall. "It turned out to be a lot. Other ladies came in from the church, bringing doughnuts, cookies, and cakes. Then after that, people started coming through the door, just a few at a time. And by afternoon, our church was filling up, and from there, we fixed food people brought in. There were so many places that donated food, and we would have

Sago Baptist Church, the site of shock, celebration, sadness, and scorn in early January of 2006. All photos by Fred Sauceman unless otherwise noted.

never imagined it would have turned out like that, but we stayed in the kitchen most of the time, a lot of us ladies, and we brought food to the people and served them."

When the church's refrigerator couldn't hold any more, the local Lowe's donated one. The coffee pot gurgled all night. The coffee was for the warming, not the waking. Folks paced and hugged and prayed. They didn't sleep.

Families stayed in that church forty-one hours, as the worst West Virginia mining disaster since 1968 unfolded down the hill in the dark.



It was in 1968 when Roger Perry lost a leg digging house coal. As a small child, he had learned to hack coal chunks out of old abandoned mines with a pick and take them home for the furnace. A high wall collapsed on him, crushing his leg so badly it couldn't be saved. Yet Roger's been a coal miner all his life, as mobile and stout as his coworkers.

Roger and his team were down deep in the Sago mine at 6:30 in the morning on January 2, 2006, 500 feet closer to the explosion than the thirteen miners who were trapped.

"We went in about 6:00 in the morning," Roger told me on a snowy Saturday in his living room in the Mud Lick Run community just north of Buckhannon. "We had to go about two miles to get to the working place. At 6:30, I was to throw a switch on the track to make a turn into our working station. We stopped and I got out of the mantrip (a car used to transport miners) and threw the switch. I got back in the mantrip and sat down. Then came a hurricane-like wind, with dust and rock blowing out of nowhere. But there was no sound. I couldn't see anything. It blew five to eight seconds. Then I started feeling heat, and I knew then it was an explosion, not a fall. I said, 'Guys, there's been an explosion. Let's get out of here.' I got out of the mantrip, but I couldn't see, just feel. My light broke, and I felt my way down the track on a coal rib, to get to the intake air. We put our self-rescuers on and started walking toward the outside to find clean air. I knew there were men back in there somewhere. I stopped and looked back. There was nothing I could do. My light was broke, and there was too much smoke and dust. I heard another mantrip, and he took us outside, where they told us what happened. I went to St. Joseph's Hospital in Buckhannon to get the dirt flushed from my eyes, then over to the church to listen for updates."

As glad as Roger's wife Donna was when she learned he'd gotten out of the mine with nothing worse than a faceful of coal dust, she couldn't rejoice. Her brother Marty and twelve of his team members were still down there.

The name Alva Martin "Marty" Bennett was at the top of every list, alphabetically, as television stations across the country released the roster of missing miners.

Marty had labored underground for almost thirty years of his life, since the birth

Wreaths on either side of the Sago Baptist Church sign.

Ron and Josephine Linger display the eight-foot-long crocheted American flag, a gift to the Sago Baptist Church from Margaret McDonald of South Mills, North Carolina.

of his son, Russell Martin, who works for the same company that employed his father. Marty's father Alva had been a miner. His grandfather Howard had, too. Four generations of Bennetts had dodged disaster, but that streak of family luck ended the second day of the new year.

The Bennetts and the Perrys made their way to the Sago Baptist Church for the vigil. Donna thought sure her mother, Anna, would never withstand the strain. Despite her severe diabetes and a heart that's only about 20 percent functional, Anna kept the watch.

"It's not supposed to happen this way," Marty's mother repeated through the night. "Children are not supposed to die before their parents."

The fellowship hall of the church was packed with people, Donna remembers. It got so crowded she had to take oxygen. She sat alongside Marty's wife Judy, who has been on oxygen for the last three years, to help her lungs battle the distended air spaces of emphysema.

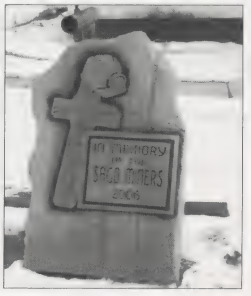
Outside it almost looked like daytime, the hillside and road illuminated by the lights from television stations and network crews who had converged on Sago from around the country. Most honored the solitude of the miners' friends and relatives who worried the night away inside the church. People all over Upshur County still talk about the courtesy and compassion shown by Anderson Cooper from CNN. Feelings, though, are still raw over Geraldo Rivera. Donna says he attempted to force his way into the church, and she's proud to say it was her son, Arnett Roger Perry II, who put his hand over the camera and chased the inconsiderate reporter out the door. In announcing funeral services, newspaper obituaries later read, "The family has requested that the media please respect their privacy."

As wrenching as the conflicting emotions were over Donna's rescued husband and missing brother, the ultimately inaccurate reports that the thirteen men were found alive left her so wrung out she couldn't even cry.

"It was a nightmare," Donna told me. "We had the miracle that they were alright, then I lost my brother. They let us believe for three hours those men were alive. Then they come in and said no survivors. It felt like they'd ripped the heart right out of you. But instead of grieving, we were mad."

Donna and Roger flip through a scrapbook of articles five inches thick. Slipped inside a plastic sleeve is the *Clarksburg Exponent Telegram* from January 4. The headline reads, "12 Found Alive."

A four-by-six photograph drops out of the scrapbook. It hasn't been pasted in so Roger and Donna can pass it among guests in their home. Donna studies it often. It was the last picture taken of Marty. He sits, smiling, alongside his wife Judy at his parents' coal-heated house on Christmas day, 2005. He'd just had a big helping of sister Donna's



The last photograph taken of Marty Bennett, Christmas 2005, with his wife Judy. Photo by family member.

Roger and Donna Perry look through the scrapbook that documents the death of her brother and his co-worker.

A roadside, sandstone memorial to the departed miners on Highway 20 south of Buckhannon, West Virginia, in Denver Carpenter's front yard.

macaroni salad, which he always insisted on, with Miracle Whip salad dressing, every time the family got together.

"Marty loved the kids," remembers Donna. "What he did, when we had these family gatherings, was play with the kids, give them rides on the four-wheeler."

Marty's young friends, his hunting and fishing buddies, the guys who worked for him at his backhoe and dozer business, his parents, his four sisters and one brother, his fellow coal miners, and cousins from all over the county started arriving at the Poling-St. Clair Funeral Home in Buckhannon to pay their respects at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 7, and they were still filing by his open casket at 8:00 that night.

Marty always had a smile. He was a real hard-working guy.

"I've never seen so many people at a visitation," says Roger Perry. "All the funerals were like that. People were lined up down the streets.

"Marty always had a smile. He was a real hard-working guy. He was one of the best miners I've ever worked with."

I asked Roger what makes a good coal miner.

"A good miner is one who'll help you do anything, who helps others do their job. He watches out for the other miners, keeps them from getting hurt."

For the time being, Roger's working at another mine up in Philippi, for the same company, wearing the same hat that was pelted with debris on that fateful morning at Sago. Four days a week, ten hours a day, for thirty years, that hat has protected him from mud, water, coal dust, dirt, and what miners call bad top, unstable material. He bought it at a flea market for $18, and it still passes safety requirements. If he ever were inclined to forget the day he lost twelve friends, all that horror comes back as he moves his hand around the back of the hat and feels the small crack created by the earthen shrapnel.

Like that unrepaired hat, the emotional scars on Upshur County will never completely heal, but the visible signs of grief are less noticeable now. The crosses hung with miners' hats have been taken down from the grounds of the courthouse in Buckhannon. Black ribbons are gone from the doors of places like Audrey's on Highway 20 north of town, where miners gather after work for a trip around the salad bar and a plate of baked steak.

"Every marquee in this county said 'Pray for the Miners,'" recalls Archie Snyder. Prayer squares, shawls, and blankets poured into the Sago Baptist Church, from as far away as Poway, California, and they're still coming. Josephine and Ron Linger took me into the fellowship hall and showed me some of the treasures.

Margaret McDonald of South Mills, North Carolina, crocheted an eight-foot-long American flag with the words "We Will Never Forget, January 2, 2006, Sago Mine" right under the stars. A small statue of a coal miner, comforted by the hand of Jesus, was left on the doorstep of the church. Kim Simmons sent copies of her book, *Lifted Up from the Deep*.

"I just found these books," said Josephine Linger. "I've only read a few pages, but it really touched me. I want to read the whole thing, because it's a beautiful book. She's telling the story of her son getting killed in a car accident, and she thought it may help us to understand."

The Lingers say their little church near the river and the railroad tracks was founded on love, and that's why they opened it up to the miners' families that night. Ninety-five percent of the church was constructed by members' own hands.

In the vestibule of Sago Baptist Church hangs a painting of a miner reading his Bible by helmet-light. "The lady who painted it had it in her house," says Ron Linger. "She said it just didn't seem to fit there, though, and then after this, the mine accident, she said she knew where it needed to be. And so she donated it to the church."

I ask Cheryl and Archie if they know of any roadside memorials to the miners, and we drive down Highway 20 south of Buckhannon to Denver Carpenter's place in Rock Cave. Out in the front yard, the retired General Motors mechanic had just mounted a sandstone slab against a Chevrolet motor stand. Sand-blasted into the rock, rich in iron ore, is the image of a cross, with a miner's lighted hat hung on top. "In Memory of the Sago Miners 2006," it reads. The artist had pulled the stone out of a rock quarry in Dover, Ohio, where Denver's brother lives. Denver says she wouldn't take a dime for the work.

What I don't find in the Perrys' scrapbook that next morning is any sign of a note Marty might have written as he was dying in the depths of that coal mine. I knew other miners had written to their families during their last hours, and I ask Donna about that. She tells me her brother, who died at fifty-one, could not read or write.

I leave Roger and Donna at mid-day, as they prepare to watch a race that afternoon on television. With the quickening snow, I ask Roger about the wisdom of driving south, further into the mountains, toward the Swiss-German community of Helvetia. He cautions against it, but I proceed, nonetheless, led from the coal mines toward higher ground, into the covering whiteness. ❖

Special thanks to Dr. Gene Bailey for making the contacts in his hometown that resulted in these interviews.

Fred Sauceman, editor of *Now & Then*, is senior writer and executive assistant to the president for public affairs at East Tennessee State University. A native of Greeneville, Tennessee, he has written widely about food and culture in the Mountain South and is the author of the newly published book *The Place Setting: Timeless Tastes of the Mountain South, from Bright Hope to Frog Level*.

Visitation

By STEPHEN HOLT

I take the outstretched trembling hand
of my once-strong uncle, halt
at the coffin of his only son.

Dry swallows come hard.

Friend, I say
in the familiar old fashion of speaking
we adopted long ago,
we must go blackberry picking again.
Soon.

Oh yes, we will, we surely will.

Remembering earth's dark beauties
clinging to distant vines, touching
thorns, feeling the sharp pain
we both well know
we shall never go berrying again,

and the vision dies young.

Stephen Holt teaches at Ohio University Southern and Russell (Kentucky) Independent Schools. His first book of poems, *Late Mowing*, came out in 2000.

SILVY'S HOUSE

By RONNI LUNDY

This house is Silvy Nett's house. Even though Jeff McRoy's name is on the deed right now and, if all goes well, mine will be in the near future, this house has been from the outset and will be forever after (even after the house itself, like Silvy, is gone) Silvy Nett's house.

Netts settled this piece of Southwest Virginia Blue Ridge land before the turn of the twentieth century. The first house sat up the rocky hill a bit and, like this one, faced both Big Rock Island Creek and the east. It was a small and rough squared-log affair. In it Silvy was born in 1909. A year later the family moved down the hill about fifty yards into this simple two-over-two clapboard they had built. It had no frills. No porches to sit on. To get from the two rooms downstairs to the two dormers up, they used a log ladder set through a hole in the second floor because the house had no stairway.

Silvy learned to walk on this plain wood floor made of thin boards, not a one of them more than two feet long. They were mill ends, had for the cheap, but good enough to outlast all those Netts, even Silvy. When she was sixteen, her daddy built a kitchen straight out the back of the house, as far as you could go until you hit the VW-sized boulder in the yard.

There were nine Nett children and all of them either died or married and moved on over to their own deeded parcel of the Nett place until all that was left in this house was Silvy and her mama and daddy. And then it was just Silvy.

She lived to be ninety-one.

A few years before she got there, she sold the house and the little-over-three acres she owned to a nephew in what's called a "living estate." It means he paid her for the place and technically owned it although she had

Illustration by Randy Sanders.

the legal right to have possession of it until she died. When the nephew and his Korean wife divorced, the wife was awarded the property in the settlement even though she'd never been there and was living over on the Carolina coast. It's from this ex-niece that Jeff McRoy, of Charlotte, bought the living estate rights and came to work on the house still lived in by Silvy. That was about 1995.

Jeff re-floored the kitchen and remodeled the walk-through fireplace (between the front two rooms) that had fallen into dangerous disrepair. He added cabinets and counters to the kitchen and a ceramic under-floor for Silvy's good wood cookstove. He put in indoor plumbing making a bath up and one down. He built an extra bedroom over the kitchen and put in narrow winding stairs in the addition. Jeff built on the porches, both front and back.

It's the front porch that has won me to this house as I've looked at its picture on the Internet. Stark and simple, it's got no rail around it, only square timbers to hold its roof. Short and crooked brick pillars hold it up, and there's not even a step down to the ground. But plainness doesn't keep this porch from beholding beauty. It's on this porch that you can hear the creek gargle and rattle. You could stare for hours undisturbed beyond the gooseberry bush and up to the water's bend at the left. At the sound of a car in the distance, you could glance over the neighbor's pasture to the road to the right and see who's coming long before they'd get here. I have spent hours in my apartment in downtown Louisville, Kentucky, imagining the moment when I would sit on this porch and feel that I'd come home at last. And the minute I actually walk out on the porch, I get a whiff of that feeling. But I have imagined as well the old lady who once lived here sitting on this porch in a rocker at the end of a busy farm day and savoring the beauty of the moment and her perfect place in it. On this count, I have imagined dead wrong.

"Naw," Jeff says when I ask if the porch is original. (The floorboards are too new to be, but I surmise they could have been replacements.) "Silvy said she didn't have much use for a porch. None of the Netts seemed to. There never was a porch on this place until I built them. This door here out of the front room, they used that mostly like a window. There wasn't a stoop here, wasn't even a step down. I asked Silvy once if she didn't think a step would make coming and going a little easier, and she said she didn't see much need for it."

The family, and Silvy, used the door out the back of the second room and then later, the one out of the kitchen. Both face away from the creek, up the steep hill that the Netts cleared of timber and farmed on a fierce slant, growing enough corn, beans, and Irish potatoes to keep them fed through the hard mountain winters. Up the hill still is a scattering of weathered log outbuildings: the chicken coop, the tool shed, the barn where they kept hay and the cows they raised for dairy.

"Silvy had one milk cow even up 'til I met her," Jeff says. She sold her milk and eggs for the little bit of money she needed to keep going. I ask how she got them to market since he's already told me that Silvy never learned to drive ("Didn't see much need for it."). She walked the five miles up the creek path any time she needed something from the Jot-Em-Down Store.

"Here's what that rascal did," he says, and points his finger in the direction of a dilapidated and dangerous looking swinging bridge a couple of hundred yards or so south. "She milked her cow every morning into pails then walked them pails over to the other side of the creek on that bridge. That's where she left them for the dairyman to pick up at the road. And he left her empty pails and her money. She worked and worked hard for every penny she had, everything she had to eat."

That hardscrabble life didn't eke out much sweetness. Silvy, Jeff says, cursed like a sailor and didn't seem to have much use for her nephews and nieces. When several of them ended up in a courtroom in an attempt to have Silvy declared incompetent and placed in a nursing facility, Jeff tells it, she looked the judge straight in the eye and said, "I just want to know who the hell put them bitches over me?" The judge sent everybody home, including Silvy.

When an aneurysm finally compelled the move to a nursing home, Silvy fought like a cat at the first place they tried and had to be moved to another facility where, for some reason, she felt comfortable enough to live peaceably. She even made friends with some residents and staff but never gave up believing that she'd go back to her house and three acres. She saved the weekly dollar allowance the home gave her and told Jeff, "That's my going home money." When someone stole it, she grieved and grieved. Then a week or two before she died, she told Jeff she'd seen an angel in a dream. Knowing the end was near, he asked with trepidation if this angel had said anything. "No," Silvy said. "Not a word. But he was riding that bitch that stole my going home money on his back," and then she roared laughing.

She could split wood like nobody's business.

Jeff has a handful of curled, sepia photos that look to be from the late 1930s to the 1940s. In them, Silvy starts out a serious girl in old-fashioned dresses but later sports jeans and flannel shirts that better suit her long and rangy frame—and the work it addressed on a daily basis. The house has new electric baseboards that Jeff has just installed. Silvy heated with a wood stove. "She could split wood like nobody's business," he says, his eyes gleaming. "Now, when I first come up here to work on the house, she told me I was welcome, but there was one thing she wouldn't ever do for me and that was fix me dinner. 'I cooked for my brothers and sisters and momma and daddy all my life, and I don't aim to cook for nobody else again,' she told me."

I have been looking over these three beautiful acres all morning and wondering if it is in my limited power and ability to keep the grassy parts mowed and plant a few rows of corn, tomatoes, and green beans. I am awed by Silvy's skill and determination. And as Jeff tells more about this woman and the price she paid to live here, I find myself becoming intimidated by—even a little frightened of—her spirit. How would she react if she knew her house was lived in by some lady writer sitting out here on this needless porch, just rocking and dreaming and listening to the water? Wouldn't she be filled with scorn and contempt for me? Wouldn't she demand to know who put this needless bitch down in her homeplace? Wouldn't her shade contrive some way to tip my chair and spill me down the hill smack into the water?

Half fretting over this fancy, it begins to dawn on me that nevertheless, Silvy is one mountain woman who won't even think to question some of the traits I've come to think of as peculiar to me, and which others seem to find simply peculiar. She won't blame me for my husband living in Alaska without me. She won't question this desperate need I seem to have for great, long gulps of solitude. She might even think it pretty clever of me to have found a way to make a living all by myself and on my own, even if it is just by something so seemingly effortless as writing. And she, above all people, would never, ever question why I would choose to turn things upside down and inside out, leave a way of life that other people value so highly just so I could plight my troth to this sharp and mean and rocky piece of oh-so-beautiful land.

Measuring all of these possibilities in my head, I decide to send her a message with my

heart, standing on the porch that Jeff built. Silently I tell Silvy that I want to buy her house and land and will do everything in my power to keep and protect them. I tell her if she's got any pull with anybody up there who can make things happen down here, I'd appreciate it. I tell her that if I get the place, I'll plant us both a mess of beans up on the hill, right where her garden used to be. I'll dry the shuck beans hung up in the attic dormer, as I expect Silvy has dried some herself. And if those heirloom seeds Bill Best has given me mutate as I expect they will to the particular angle of the sun as it slants into this holler, in this rocky Virginia soil, well then, I'll name that new bean that comes in her honor: The Silvy Nett Bean.

And then I let it go.

Jeff is back on the porch now with the realtor and we are getting ready to leave. He puts his hand up to one of the square posts and maybe the feel of the painted lumber on his palm, maybe the slant of the sun moving on now into the afternoon, reminds him, but there's suddenly one more story he wants to tell us before we go.

"The last day I come up here to finish up the porch, Silvy was working in the house, but she kept coming up here to the door and just a-looking at what I was up to. I didn't know what she'd think about this porch here where one never was before. About midday she asks me if I'm not getting hungry, if I don't want some dinner. I said I was about done and maybe when I was finished, we'd go up the road and get us a hot dog. Silvy hardly ate any meat at all, but she'd have herself a hot dog from up at the store sometimes.

"But she said, no, she didn't feel much like a hot dog and did I like corn? And I said, yessum, I like corn. And then a little bit later she come back to that door and said do I like green beans? And I said, well yes, I sure do. And that went on with one dish after another for a while and then finally she come to the door and said, 'Well, ain't you about finished here yet, 'cause your dinner's ready.' So I finished right up and went inside and there must have been nine bowls of different vegetables on the table and cornbread.

"And we ate it and then after we cleaned up, I said, you want to try sitting out on that porch for a while? So we brought these straight-back cane chairs out and sat here and listened and talked. And after that, that's what we'd do times when I was up here, when we'd get done working. She'd sit in a straight chair like that and we'd tell tales. She'd lean back so far, and when it was a good one, throw back that head and just laugh. I'd say, 'Silvy, stop rocking back in that chair, you're gonna tip yourself over!' And that'd just make her tip back more and laugh all the harder." ❖

Ronni Lundy is the author of three acclaimed cookbooks, *Butter Beans to Blackberries: Recipes from the Southern Garden; The Festive Table: Recipes and Stories for Creating Your Own Holiday Traditions;* and *Shuck Beans, Stack Cakes, and Honest Fried Chicken.* In 2004 she published *In Praise of Tomatoes: Tasty Recipes, Garden Secrets, Legends & Lore.* Her writing on food has appeared in *Esquire, Gourmet, Bon Appetit,* and *Cooking Light.* She lives in Asheville, North Carolina.

FITTING IN
Outsiders in a Rural Mountain Community

By FRED CARLISLE

Mark Givens's grandfather built the family homeplace in Clover Hollow, Virginia, in 1916.

Three Meadow Mountain, 1992. Photo by Barbara Carlisle.

"I feel pretty attached to it," Mark Givens said, after I'd asked him about his house—the family home place built by his grandfather in 1916. "Until I go in yours, and then I'd like to have a new one. I don't feel that way about many. I think you made yours livable. I really like comin' to your house." I didn't pursue that further. We were talking about his place. But for Mark, my house apparently fit into Clover Hollow in an interesting and hospitable way. He felt comfortable in it, and moreover, he seemed at ease talking with me about himself and his family. Maybe I should be content with that kind of acceptance—it's friendly and neighborly—and let this "fitting in" issue go. But I can't.

From the moment we acquired property in Clover Hollow—a rural mountain valley in the Alleghenies near Newport, Virginia—I was anxious about "fitting in"—do we? can we? how?—and for me it is a complex architectural, personal, and social question. It seems even more difficult when the community has been comparatively stable. Over time, Clover Hollow has changed, and the pressures increase with every decade. But change has not been so great there as it has in many American communities. The local people have a strong sense of continuity and identity based on rural, agricultural, and mountain practices and values. They share a powerful cultural memory, and they distinguish sharply between natives and newcomers—between insiders and outsiders.

Many natives work outside the community—as they have for decades—at the university, in commerce, government, or industry, and they identify somewhat with other employees and with the cultures of their workplaces. Nevertheless, most insiders identify primarily with the place where they were born and raised. They are natives of Newport, Clover Hollow, or a nearby community. Their histories, homes, and "people" are here.

The "Come Here's" Arrive

A number of years ago, I began noticing a white spot on a distant mountainside whenever I stopped at the grocery and gas store where we left the main highway, drove through Newport, and headed toward Clover Hollow. I thought nothing of it at first but soon realized I was seeing my house under construction. Then in late December, the house receded from view—the mountain seemed to absorb it—when the builders covered the

white Tyvek house wrap with gray siding. It was visible long enough, however, to make me wonder if this house—and if we—fit into the landscape and the community. The architect said the meadow would never be the same after construction, and the excavation proved him right. I also knew a house placed "up there"—high on the mountainside—would change the head of the hollow significantly. Even now, it is visible along the road from two miles away, and at night the outside lights can be seen from five or six miles. You can't miss it.

We did not, in the end, alter the view so dramatically, but those few months of a white house forced me to consider the entire hollow in contemplating fit. We were not just building a house on our own private property isolated from everything and everyone else. We were entering and in some sense modifying a well-defined domain and an established community. I had to consider not only the buildings but also the history, the way of life, and the people. And I had to think about us, as well—how we might fit in—how we might alter the social landscape.

Barbara and I had no family or history to take us to Clover Hollow or connect us to the mountains. At the time, we were typical academic migrants looking for a beautiful place to live. We came from another history and culture altogether. We were, according to a native, part of the Ph.D. pollution of Newport and Clover Hollow. Once here, however, we discovered a community with a long history and a vital sense of itself. Families have been living and farming in this hollow for 200 years, and they, their descendants, and the "newcomers" of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have built homes, lives, and communities. We tried to learn that history and create a place for ourselves within the community—knowing all the while we were newcomers and always would be.

A New House in an Established Community

The style of the house we call Three Meadow Mountain is based on the traditional western Virginia T-plan or L-plan farmhouse of the nineteenth century. We chose the vernacular mainly for intellectual and aesthetic reasons—so typically academic—but we also believed the house might fit better into the landscape and community if it was rooted in a regional tradition. The house breaks sharply with tradition, however, by incorporating a number of contemporary variations.

From the moment framing was complete, neighbors and friends could see that Three Meadow Mountain resembled a classic Giles County farmhouse. They seemed to understand that we were paying respect to their—or to their neighbors'—houses. They liked coming there. They enjoyed the view. And they seemed to appreciate the house itself in both its vernacular and contemporary modes.

I would like to think that Nancy Sibold, a fifty-year resident of Clover Hollow who married into an old farming family, spoke for many: "It's good in a lot of ways. I like to meet new people. When I visited you in your home, you were very gracious, and I really enjoyed that. It hasn't bothered me at all that people have moved here. I think everyone has welcomed them."

Mark Givens also assured me we have a place—sort of. "I don't see you all as invaders. You all haven't tried to change anything or bothered anyone." He was trying to be friendly, but I heard an implied sense of difference. We may be in this place—acceptable, perhaps—but we are not of it.

There is obviously much more to "fitting in" than first impressions or polite acceptance. We tried to learn the architectural language of the houses and buildings in the valley and interpret it in a new way. The old houses were direct adaptations to a rural, mountain situation. People used materials from the land—stones for underpinnings, clay for bricks, logs for walls, and later, lumber milled on site for framing and siding. They built and expanded the houses as need required and money allowed—starting, in the early years, with a log structure, then adding a framed addition and covering it all with clapboard. The houses suited a farm family's needs, and they also had a pleasing aesthetic. Three Meadow Mountain is obviously not a nineteenth-century farmhouse, nor are we farmers. It emphasizes beauty and historical reference over simple practicality.

In one sense we took possession of the landscape by acquiring eighty acres of mountainside, building an access road where none had been and constructing a house where

there was none before. We changed the end of the valley noticeably. These are acts of possession and even displacement. But that isn't the whole story. We had a compelling responsibility, we believed, to Newport and Clover Hollow to serve and not just possess.

Our house serves by paying homage, and it also serves by redefining the head of the hollow in ways that maintain propriety and decorum. It organizes the landscape and gives it a further human definition. People have been doing that here for centuries—making human places with paths, roads, homes, barns, fences, and fields. They have been creating out of raw mountain space a social and cultural domain. They possess, but they also assume responsibility for the places they have been given to care for. Designed and placed well, a house can serve and also improve its landscape. Its inhabitants, acting knowledgeably and mindfully, can as well.

As dwellers in the house and on the land, we also interacted with the landscape. The architecture creates a visual flow between the inside and outside through large windows that give broad views in every direction and through exterior glass doors which provide visual, as well as physical, entrances and exits. The design extends the life within outward and brings the landscape inward. It expresses the relationship among house, self, and place—between the human and natural worlds.

We had a compelling responsibility, we believed, to Newport and Clover Hollow to serve and not just possess.

Outsiders Searching for a Way

Barbara and I also tried to learn the social and historical languages of Clover Hollow and Newport, so that we could understand the community and find our place in it. We wanted to be more than intrusive outsiders or "flat land furriners," as Doris Link, a sixth-generation native, laughingly referred to newcomers. Even those natives receptive to newcomers, like Doris, "don't want somebody comin' in here and tellin' them (the natives) what's good for them when they pretty much know what's good for them." Out there, we are the ones who speak with an accent—a social and cultural accent, as well as a linguistic one.

The architectural openness of Three Meadow Mountain provided the ground for our participating in the landscape and life of the hollow. It was, so to speak, our first gesture of reaching out to the valley and its people and drawing the place and people in. The design fit not only into an historical framework but into a topographical and social one as well. At least that was our intent.

We tried to supplement the forms of respect and service that have been part of the life here for 200 years. We lived with the land largely as it is. We altered the meadow as little as possible and left the woods intact. We sustained and improved the land as best we could. We extended, I would like to think, but didn't displace, the forms of life in the valley.

Barbara established and cultivated gardens, restoring life and variety with local plantings to a formerly unused and overgrown meadow. I maintained and worked slowly to restore the pastures as open space and hay fields. Our neighbor, Graydon Shrader, took hay from two fields. We cleared the wooded areas near the house of brush and noxious weeds to permit natural grasses to grow and wildflowers to flourish. We tried to protect the small wetlands in our pond meadow.

Compared to our neighbor Doak Lucas's fifty years of farming his land, we maintained, protected, and improved very modestly, perhaps insignificantly. A seventh-generation Lucas, Doak maintained the way of life brought to the hollow by his ancestors. Until he retired, he farmed over 300 acres. He built a life and sustained a family. He possessed, served, and improved the land.

Our house extended us into Doak's community. It was an extension of our social bodies and selves toward the place and the people.

Communities of Interest and Difference

"You and me don't make any difference to one another," Mark Givens once said. "But it's not like that with the people around here I've known for a long time." He was talking about how family and friends can help you be a better person—or a worse one. He said it in

passing and meant simply that he and I do not make the kind of difference to one another that kinship and old friendships make.

This and a close friend's observation made me acutely aware of the ironies of the splendid rural isolation we enjoyed. We had made, this friend said, "the quintessential bourgeois move." We built an expensive house in the country. We surrounded ourselves with eighty acres. We withdrew from others and presumably disengaged from serious social problems. We went to a valley and community that is virtually all white and disconnected from larger social issues like race and class. Only the bourgeois can afford such choice and control, she seemed to be saying. Our attempts to become part of the community merely indulged an illusion.

I can't deny Mark's sense of my difference—I am an outsider—nor can I reject out of hand the class issue our friend raised. Doris Link describes this gap even more pointedly. "The people that have always lived here have the kind of connectedness that nobody else can have. They've always known the same people and belonged to the same churches. There is a difference if you've been raised in a place forever. There's just a difference in how you feel about the people you've always known and the new people."

As strongly as Doris feels about her ancestors and her land, she also understands the value of collaborating with newcomers to sustain tradition, confront threats, and celebrate the past and present of Newport. Outsiders, "we," bring talents and knowledge which can serve insider interests as well as our own. Without the leadership, for example, of certain newcomers, the community would probably not have come together to fight construction of a 765kV power line through the area or write a successful proposal for the Greater Newport Rural Historic District.

There is a community of interest among newcomers and natives that focuses on issues and specific

projects to preserve and improve the place we have all been given to care for. Insiders and outsiders achieve real—if momentary and selective—bonding in these situations. "The underlying thing is a focus or cause or whatever you want to call it," Doris explains, "a thing where we all think and feel about the same, even though some's been here a long time and some's been here a short while. You put aside differences or personal preferences to concentrate on getting the job done."

In 1991, Appalachian Power (then a subsidiary of American Electric Power) filed an application to construct a 115-mile, 765kV power line from Wyoming County, West Virginia, to Cloverdale, Virginia, near Roanoke. Several of the proposed corridors passed near or through Newport and Clover Hollow. In Newport, Citizens Organized to Protect the Environment (COPE) organized in early 1992 and fought the line for a decade. In the end, the opposition succeeded.

Barbara and I became active shortly after we acquired our land, and I served on the COPE Steering Committee for a short time. Even though newcomers led COPE initially, it was a collaborative organization—a coalition of newcomers and natives. Doris Link later became president, but that didn't change her sense of difference. The power line is simply one of those important things "where we all think and feel about the same."

In 2000, the Virginia Department of Natural Resources designated the rural areas around Newport as the Greater Newport Rural Historic District. The district is also listed on the National Historic Register. A newcomer and a native of Clover Hollow led the project. It involved a working group of roughly twenty people evenly divided between natives and newcomers. It took six years and the collaboration, once again, of insiders and outsiders.

"My original interest," Dorothy Domermuth, the newcomer, explained, "was not for the historic part so much as just fighting the power line." Even though the project made Doris Link "aware of how deeply I felt about this place," she agreed with the group's primary purpose. "We were advised that we would be a stumbling block in the way of the power company." Later on, the group recognized the intrinsic historic value of the project.

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Clover Hollow at midwinter. Photo by Barbara Carlisle.

ESSIE

By GRACE MARSHALL

Thirteen-year-old Essie Riggs smoothed the doll's blue gingham dress and laid it in the cardboard doll bed. She sure loved the dark-haired toy. Reminded her of her sister Mattie. She missed Mattie powerful. Hadn't seen her in a month of Sundays. Cherokee Indian and Black Irish heritage gave Essie her dark eyes and flat, round face. She was down-home and quiet, where Mattie could charm a room full of people with her glib tongue and strong opinions.

Essie glanced at the clock. Almost time for her husband Richard to be home from the mines. She stirred a pot of soup beans, then struggled with a heavy cast-iron skillet, clanging it on the flat iron top of the Harvest Wheat coal stove. She greased the pan and watched as a clump of white lard melted hot and spitting in the skillet. She poured a smooth yellow cornmeal mixture into the pan. It took both of her tiny hands to load the cast-iron skillet into the oven. Soup beans, fried taters, and cornbread were Essie and Richard's nightly fare. On special occasions after payday, Richard would splurge at the company store and get a can of salmon that Essie would pat into fishcakes.

The bubbling red soup beans made her stomach growl. She lifted the lid and a burst of thick aromatic steam flushed her face. Essie brushed back a wisp of moist black curl. Grabbing a spoon, she took a bite. Red beans danced on her tongue as she tried to cool them down before swallowing. Dunking a cup into a pot of fresh-drawn well water, she drank deeply, soothing her scalded tongue.

Black-faced as a minstrel, Richard walked into their company-owned cabin. He swung his lunch pail onto a square wormwood table. Flopping down into a rough-hewn chair, he removed a metal miner's hat. He rubbed his sweaty head. It was hard to tell if his hair was naturally dark or the result of nine hours cutting coal in the belly of the earth.

"Where's my vittles?" he growled.

"Hold your britches!" Essie spat back.

Thirty-odd years later this child bride became my mother-in-law. She bore thirteen children. I married one of them clumped in the middle. When I first met Essie, it took me months to understand her tight-lipped Southern speak. It was a whole new language to me, and I strained to make sense of the garbled words.

I know she didn't like me at first. I was the Yankee from Colorado that her boy Roy married. She regaled me with homegrown medicinal cures for my colicky baby girl. She taped a silver dollar to my daughter's belly button to make sure it became an "inny." She constantly warned me about my

Essie displays a photograph of her family home. Photo courtesy Grace Marshall.

child getting worms. How could she think I would let my child get worms! Of course, my daughter did get a case of the worms. I swallowed my pride and listened to yet another home remedy.

It took years of polite distance between us before we really warmed up to each other. Until then I had regarded her with a cool respect. Early in my marriage I could see I had married someone like my father-in-law. Rounders, they called them in the South. Roy, like his daddy, had a taste for liquor and other women. After years of spousal difficulties, Essie and I realized our sameness, our common pain. I began to look forward to sitting with my mother-in-law on her long front porch. We rocked in our chairs and shared small-town gossip and tales of our husbands' less-than-wonderful behavior. Our subtle bond continued to grow over the years.

She became my hero. I watched this diminutive four-foot-nine woman cement a family together with her hard physical work and country common sense. Up at five o'clock every morning, Essie would work through a neighbor's basket of laundry to earn extra money for the family. She babysat not only her growing brood of grandchildren but other children as well. If they didn't behave, she'd cut a switch and give them a dose of Appalachian discipline. Scurrying through the house, she'd have it clean by noon and then maybe take an afternoon snooze in front of the TV after a dip of snuff.

One of my favorite stories is how Essie replaced her wringer washer by saving half-a-dollar from every bottle of liquor she bought for her husband. Richard would send Essie to the state liquor store on Main Street. Off she'd trudge in her black flat loafers, overcoat and black purse in hand, to the ABC store and buy a pint of Red Rose whiskey. Fifty cents in change from every trip to the store added up over time. Quarter after quarter grew in her Mason jars until there was enough money to buy a Sears automatic washer and dryer. No more hours of washing, wringing, rinsing, wringing, and hanging clothes on the line. Life had become much easier for the daughter of Wise County, Virginia's, notorious bootlegger, Greenberry Adkins.

Of the thirteen children she bore, she lost three: an unnamed stillborn, Venus to diabetes in early childhood, and a grown daughter, Mattie Sue, to drowning in a pool in Vero Beach, Florida. Roy and I were visiting at Essie's when the Coeburn police knocked on her door to tell her Sue had drowned. She accepted the news with stoic sadness. In the morning, as usual, she was up at five a.m. doing dishes and cleaning the kitchen. At first I wondered how she could do these ordinary chores. Why wasn't she weeping? Wasn't she grieving? It was years later that I understood: The ordinary kept her sane, kept the despair at bay.

Quarter after quarter grew in her Mason jars until there was enough money to buy a Sears automatic washer and dryer.

Booze, cigarettes, and black lung eventually caught up with Richard. Essie nursed him through his final years. She carried food to his bed, fed him, and emptied his urinal bottle. Faithful to the end, she seemed to have forgotten the years of his wandering eye and heavy drinking. When he passed away she mourned his loss with silence and a heavy heart.

After I divorced my philandering husband and moved cross-country, I lost track of Essie. But sometime later, my intuition called me back to Wise County. I knew I had to see her before she died. A few more wrinkles crowded the corners of her eyes, but little else had changed about Essie Riggs. Her short, bobbed hair had turned steel gray. She still spoke through tight lips, dipped her snuff and spit brown residue in a small tin

cup. We sat on the porch of her son's house and rocked once again. I listened while she told tales of wandering women and which house had burned down in Coeburn the night before. I videotaped Essie, asked her about her life. I wanted to capture her spirit, her essence for future generations.

I asked her, "What has been the happiest time of your life?"

She cocked her head to the side, studied the question carefully, and then said, "Well, honey, I don't reckon I've ever been happy."

Those of us who later watched that videotape and heard those words grieved for her. Was it the backbreaking years of hard work, the many disappointments in her marriage, or the seemingly unending years of quarrels among her children that brought such discontentment? Tight-lipped as ever, Essie didn't expound on her unhappiness.

When Essie slipped away at the age of ninety-two, I was thousands of miles away in Seattle. My ex-husband phoned and told me her kids were finally at peace; they had crowded around her bedside and prayed as she died in her sleep. I hope she knew that all the hatchets had been buried, the "I'm sorrys" had all been said, and that this family had united at last because of Essie.

After hanging up the phone, I sat down in my rocker and whispered, "I love you," to my empty living room.

I heard her reply in my heart: *Well, honey, I love you too.* ❖

Grace Marshall is a freelance writer whose material has also appeared in *Canticle Magazine*. She spent a number of years in Southwest Virginia working in radio at WSLC in Roanoke and WNVA in Norton. After 30 years in broadcasting, she retired from radio and now divides her time among writing, working for the Social Security Administration, and raising her grandson Dawson. She lives in the Pacific Northwest.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

One of the miners who survived the "Miracle of Hominy Falls," West Virginia, May 1, 1968. Jeanne Rasmussen Collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.

ISSA YOUSEF MAÁYEH'S APPALACHIAN JOURNEY

By CAMELLIA MAYA

Editor's Note: Among the leather boots and Levis, there's a silent shrine behind the cash register at Chris' Department Store in downtown Gate City, Virginia. It preserves the memory of a man and a woman of two drastically different backgrounds, one Middle Eastern, one Southern Appalachian. One Greek Orthodox, one Southern Baptist. When Issa Yousef Maáyeh died in January 2006, less than a year after his wife Mary, their twins, Joe and Camellia, hung the funeral wreath on the wall of the family store. Suspended from that wreath are three black ribbons, each bearing a different name written in cursive with glue and sprinkled with gold sparkles. They're three names for one person, the Arabic, the Americanized, and the affectionate: Issa Yousef Maáyeh, Mr. Chris Joseph Maya, Sr., and Mr. Chris, the name customers called the patriarch of the clothing and dry goods store on Jackson Street.

Occasionally, family members from Jordan and thereabouts would visit the Mayas in Scott County. Joe remembers the one time, in 1976, when the Mayas went back to Jordan to visit relatives: "There must have been 200 kinfolks there to meet us at the airport in Amman."

My father, Chris Joseph Maya, came to America in 1948. He traveled by ship, and the journey took three weeks to complete.

Dad left Jerusalem after the war between the Arabs and the Jews broke out in 1948.

Born in Madaba, Jordan, in 1910, he was moved, along with the rest of his family, to Jerusalem. His father had remarried after the death of my grandmother. Dad attended St. George's School and was one of the top students. He was often used as an example to the other students. Dad did his best by applying himself and not being lazy.

1948: Chris Maya aboard ship coming to America from his native Jordan. Photo courtesy Maya family.

After his education, he was employed by Barclay's Bank in Jerusalem for eleven years. He had Jewish friends as well as Arabic friends. The ordinary people got along well regardless of heritage. It was the governments who could not get along.

After my grandfather passed away in 1948, Dad felt compelled to start a new life in America. There was no freedom in the Middle East—no freedom of speech at all. When he told me why he left, he would say, "They are always killing each other." Opportunity to work hard and achieve success existed in America.

Dad had Syrian friends in New York, and they sponsored him. He looked for any kind of work and found jobs in the Garment District and at drug companies. At 115 pounds, he just could not do the lifting, pulling, and pushing these duties required.

He had a cousin in Appalachia, Mike Salaita, who had a retail clothing store. Mike invited Dad to come to Southwest Virginia and work for him at his business. He agreed and spent four years working for his cousin.

After he saved enough money, he decided to open his own business in Clinchport, Virginia. He opened on $2,000, and he immediately had success. The business flourished.

Mary Roberts came to work in his store in 1953. She was as hard-working and responsible as he was, and they fell in love and married a year later.

Dad welcomed Mom's family as his own and loved them all.

Life was rough at first. They cooked and lived in the back of the store. It was open fourteen hours a day.

I still have ladies come in and tell me they bought their first ready-made clothes from the store. New clothes were a luxury then for almost everyone.

And there are countless numbers of ladies who said they had their first jobs with my Dad's store. At one time, Chris and Mary Maya ran four stores: one in Clinchport, one in Weber City, and two in Gate City. In one of the stores alone, they employed fourteen sales clerks. Things have changed so much.

After the birth of my twin brother and me, Mom and Dad eventually consolidated the four stores into the biggest one they owned, in Gate City.

Naturally all this merchandise crowded the store and stock piled to the ceilings. But if someone asked them for an item, they knew exactly where it was and retrieved it. People still recall those days with awe, when Dad knew where everything was.

They would tell me, "Chris could sell ice to an Eskimo."

My Dad's Arabic name is Issa (Chris) Yousef (Joseph) Maáyeh (Maya). At immigration in New York, he was encouraged to shorten his name to Maya. We still have people who cannot pronounce it.

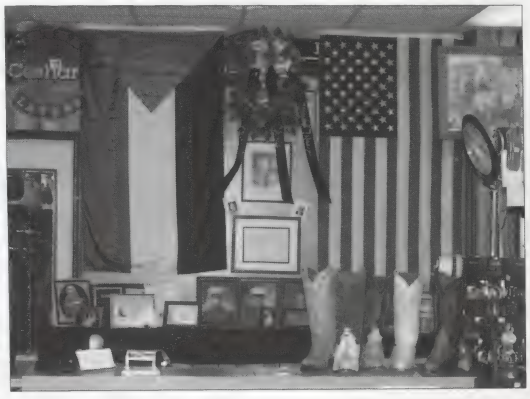
Dad probably encountered more discrimination in the rural South than anywhere. Foreigners were commonplace in New York, but in Southwest Virginia, they were often labeled as "Jews," regardless

Chris and Mary Maya and twins Joe and Camellia, August 1956.

Chris and Mary Maya celebrate Gate City, Virginia's, 100th birthday, June 11, 1988. Photos courtesy Maya family.

of their heritage. Usually, the day after Halloween, we would come to the store and see phrases written on the plateglass windows—"Dirty Jew," "Go back home, Jew." Every November 1 for several years, Mom and Dad would wash off the soap-written words.

My father said prayer at every meal, before dressing in the morning, and at bedtime. He was raised in the Christian Greek Orthodox Church. We had relatives visit every year from the Middle East, but my father was the only one I observed praying regularly.



His hospitality was strong. If you were at the dining table and refused to eat, that was an insult to the host. You ate and, at least, tried everything that was offered.

I remember my aunts' cooking. It was wonderful. Plenty of rice, various stuffed vegetables, and meat, usually lamb. My Syrian godmother made great pastries and cookies.

I think my passion for cookies originated with the anticipation of these marvelous statements of love from their kitchens. My Mom, Mary, learned to cook Arabic dishes from our many visitors.

My Dad was a loving man and tried to be fair to everyone. But his convictions were strong for what he believed was right or wrong.

He liked to read, watch Westerns on television, and played with us out in the yard. He adored our Mom and us, and we always knew so. He also liked to travel and see America.

We never attended church. Mom was a Southern Baptist. Dad, being raised Greek Orthodox, didn't understand some of the preaching, and there was no Greek Orthodox Church anywhere in the area. Yet there was no doubt about their strong belief in God and the power of prayer.

Dad stayed in Southwest Virginia because Mom wanted to remain near her family. He always treated her family as his own and loved them all.

We lost our Mom in May 2005, when she was seventy-two, and our Dad died in January of 2006 at the age of ninety-six. For the last several years of his life, Dad suffered from Alzheimer's Disease. He and Mom were married for over fifty years.

I still miss them every day, and we still maintain the business they started in Gate City, Virginia. ❖

Editor's Postscript: On January 24, 2006, the Gate City Town Council unanimously voted to adopt a resolution recognizing the dedication and commitment provided by Chris and Mary Maya as merchants in the Town of Gate City, where their two children continue the family business today.

Camellia Maya is the manager of Chris' Department Store in Gate City, Virginia. She has two sons, Matt and Zachary, and says she's a "biker chick in training." She holds a B.A. degree in psychology from the University of Tennessee.

The funeral wreath honoring the Arabic, the Americanized, and the affectionate names of the family patriarch. Photo by Fred Sauceman.

FINDING MARYLAND'S FIRST FRIENDS

Mom's Looking Up Dead People Again

By LOUISA ARONOW

In the dusty light of the National Heritage Museum, Martha held up a small round piece of wood with a flower carved on top. She was feeling the weight of it in her hand as Shirley, our museum guide, said, "My grandmother's was just like that, but rectangular."

"My grandmother used a round butter mold, but bigger," said Martha. "Four of her pounds weighed five pounds."

Martha proudly recalled the little Jersey cows. "The state standard for milk was 3.5 percent butterfat. My grandmother's had 5.3, and then she made butter from sweet cream. Have you cleaned all the parts on a separator?"

"Thirty-two of them," replied Shirley, without any hesitation.

"Then there was the butter churn," added Martha. "You had to scald everything. The churn was wooden. You pulled the dasher up and down to make the cream congeal. The churn was nearly as tall as I. You stood on a wooden box to reach the dasher and activate it, until you got bigger. Sometimes they sold the cream."

"My Mom put it in the fridge," said Shirley. "My grandmother had a springhouse. There was no electricity, and she didn't have water in the house. We had to bring it."

I asked Martha if she actually liked going to visit her grandmother's farm when she was young, in spite of all the work required of her and her sisters. She replied with an enthusiastic "Yes! We'd fight for a chance to go there!"

Martha Turner and Shirley Friend-Drent share more than memories of grandmothers luxuriant in cookies, cream, and chores. They are both members of the extensive Friend family, descended from the first white settlers of Northwest Maryland about 240 years ago. Shirley is the librarian at the Colonel Lester D. Friend, Sr. Historical Library, located upstairs from the little museum in the heart of downtown Friendsville, Maryland. I brought my mother-in-law, Martha Turner, to the library so we could both learn more of her family history. To my surprise, we discovered a treasure more valuable than a rich connection to a fascinating family history: We made new connections with other adventurers into the world of genealogy and developed a new connection with each other.

Martha is delighted to find some photos she hasn't seen before and tries to identify every family member. Photos courtesy Louisa Aronow.

My primary purpose in trekking the backroads of Maryland with Martha was to assist her in her adventures in genealogy. "I'm just finding out who I am," she said. "These are my great grandparents, aunts, and uncles. I'm just getting to know them, and I'm eighty-two."

"Maybe it's a throw-back to my Indian ancestors," mused Martha, "but the Indians all had at least one storyteller who was revered for knowing the history of the tribe. I guess I'm the only one interested in our mixed heritage. I've always felt that if teachers just made history more personal, then kids could relate to it through their own families as having been real flesh and blood people, not just dry dates and 'begats.' If they could just realize that these people were flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone. It goes to pride in our ancestors and what they were able to accomplish and how that contributed to what we are today."

As long as I've known Martha, she's been a history buff. As a child she was a notorious bookworm and outstanding student. It's quite logical, I concluded, that a person who loves history would be fascinated by genealogy.

I asked Shirley if she enjoyed studying history when she was in school. "I hated it," she answered, to my astonishment. "But now I can't learn it fast enough."

In her job as museum curator and librarian, Shirley assists people from all over the globe in their searches through family history. Initially her son got her interested in exploring family roots, but he didn't understand her continuing fascination with genealogy.

"My kids just laughed and said, 'Oh, Mom's looking up dead people again' when I started," she said. "I got into it when my second husband died. I thought—here's something I can do and not get into trouble. I just researched my immediate family. Then I started here two years ago. I've met so many people and I try to keep in touch with as many as I can. I keep a list of people and who they are researching and try to connect them as best I can. I have become more interested in the history of people and where they went and the geography of the area."

In the genealogical library upstairs, Martha and Shirley pored over photo albums, helping each other identify the stern-faced progenitors. The ladies were observed by a wall full of Friend family ancestors. Across from the wall stood tall rows of books with family records predating 1776. Shirley was delighted when Martha could identify a grayed old picture of her grandmother's farmhouse beside a large barn.

"That's where my grandfather, Thomas Collin Friend, died," Martha commented. "He dropped dead in the barn door. Years later, my mother was fairly incapacitated because she had so many little strokes. She was living with her children, about ten miles away. But when they went by the old farm and saw that barn door, she got all agitated."

Shirley made a hasty notation and remarked, "That's what I like about these genealogy searches. It's the stories that make the history come alive."

Later Martha shared a treasure, recently discovered by her cousin: her paternal

Martha Turner and Shirley Drent examine genealogical records to see how they are related.

Martha and Shirley examine family photos in the museum. Everyone had relatives in the service.

grandfather's memoranda from the 1940s, in an almost illegible elderly scrawl, recounting a few of his memories and recollections of family history. The ladies were fascinated by the prices. In the 1920s he sold a whole carcass of beef, dressed out, for four cents a pound.

Martha proudly related the story of the first Friends in Maryland. The community was founded by her maternal four-times-great grandfather, "Old John" Friend and his brothers, who purchased the land from Shawnee Indians around 1765. The original Friends had been Puritans in England. Around 1653 they left their homeland, seeking religious freedom. The journey to the colonies was delayed by a storm, and after a layover of many years in Holland, the Friend family, with a few acquired Dutch wives, arrived in Eastern Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Old John worked as a chain carrier for the famous surveyor George Washington around 1750.

I asked Shirley how the land was paid for, and she explained, "The story is that the land was traded for a bean kettle. A fellow in Ohio claims to have it. There were probably some axes and other things, too."

Members of the Friend family were integral parts of early U.S. history. They fought in every war, including the French and Indian War, and on both sides in the Civil War. Old John worked as a chain carrier for the famous surveyor George Washington around 1750. One of Old John's sisters, Gertrude, was the grandmother of a signer of the Declaration of Independence, John Morton, whose name appears just below Ben Franklin's on the document.

"It gives us great pride that they fought to make and keep us a nation," Martha added later. "They were doing it for us, that we might be born who we are and that we might remember them."

The Friend family grew, inhabiting much of present-day Garrett County. As Martha recounted her lineage, a smile bloomed on Shirley's face.

"I didn't know that," she said. "I better make a note of it. I just made another connection."

"We just might be kissing cousins," added Martha.

I never get tired of hearing stories about Martha "Mattie" Teets Friend, my mother-in-law's grandmother and namesake.

"Mattie was the first licensed midwife in Maryland," said Martha proudly. "She delivered dozens of babies, in rain and snowstorms."

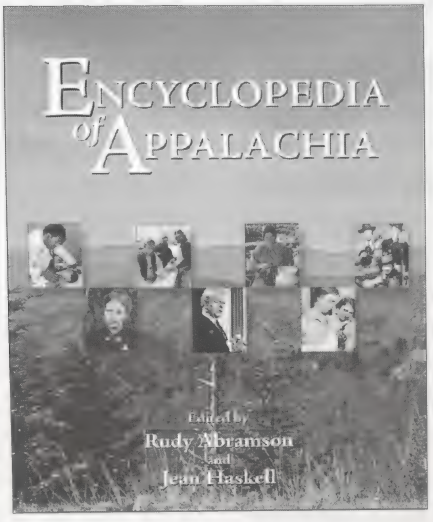
Mattie was well known for her skillful grafting of fruit trees and vegetable cultivation. I wish I were able to meet this wise woman.

Martha's tales of growing up in the Appalachian town of Terra Alta, in the northeast corner of West Virginia, also fascinate me. Over fifty years ago she left the world of midwives and home-canned food to seek a better life for her family in California. When I met Martha, I was seeking a better life for my family, too, a life full of midwives and home-canned food in California. I continue to listen for gems of knowledge from Martha's experience that might guide me in a fruitful direction. ❖

Louisa Aronow is a writer and English teacher in Northern California who has been smitten by the beauty of Western Maryland. She hopes to enjoy many more backroad adventures with Martha Turner in the mountains where the state lines meet.

ON CREATING AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF APPALACHIA

By JILL OXENDINE



The making of the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* stands in my own heart and mind as a fundamentally significant happening. I worked as managing editor for the text from 1998 until late 2004, when all its pieces and parts had been properly compiled, labeled, and shipped off to the University of Tennessee Press for publishing.

Now, with the book's long-awaited release, I am reminded almost daily by the media, movies, books, local events, and news journalism, that the reference has never been more needed.

In January 2006, the Sago mine disaster near Tallmansville, West Virginia, led me to recall *Encyclopedia* excerpts about the long, troubling history of mining in the region. The fact that the safety of our Appalachian mines, which produce almost half the nation's coal, was thrust into the spotlight is reminiscent of other mine disasters that occurred in our region's history. These include the Monongah Mine Disaster of 1907, the Hawk's Nest Tragedy of the early 1930s, and the more recent 1968 Farmington, West Virginia, disaster, in which seventy-eight miners were lost. While one would assume that a fundamental issue such as mine safety would have been resolved long ago, the truth is that government politics and "Big Coal" are still usurping the attention that should be paid to human life and living conditions in forgotten communities.

As one editorial in the January 9, 2006, *New York Times* put it, "This mining tragedy (Sago) should focus us all on another forgotten, mistreated corner of society."

The *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, a project undertaken by the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University, lays bare many essential facts related to these issues.

But while this reference explores controversy from the past, it is also a book about innovation and vision, about a place of fas-

cinating beauty and geological depth, and a people who possess a soulfulness and love of life.

I was born in Southern Appalachia. My parents were the first in their generation to earn college degrees. My brother, Jimmy Neil Smith, founded the National Storytelling Festival, and I am reminded through him that history can be made simply by virtue of a vision or by daring to give voice to an idea. "Wouldn't it be neat to stage an event where people do nothing but tell stories?" It was this statement that brought comedian Jerry Clower and mountain man Ray Hicks to Jonesborough, Tennessee, in 1973 to tell stories on a stage made from a flat-bed wagon. The festival and its impact are now a part of Appalachian history and detailed in this book.

The project ended officially with a total of 30 sections and took about seven years.

The entire encyclopedia itself was at one time only a vision represented by words—why don't we compile a reference work detailing every aspect of Appalachian history? And why don't we place this book in as many public schools as possible from southern New York down to northern Alabama? Wouldn't the rising generations stand taller knowing they have a distinctive culture and past that played a major role in the making of our nation's history?

Our children can learn that one of the greatest families in musical history, the Carter Family from Hiltons, Virginia, had its roots in a world similar to their own. With the passing of Janette Carter earlier this year, the last surviving daughter of country music legend A.P. and Sara Carter, we are reminded of our mountain descendants and their achievements.

From the beginning, I was deeply honored to work on the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*. My every task was faced with reverence and, what seemed to many, as an intense perfectionism. Because there were 1,200 or so writers and fifty section editors, the job entailed much more than simply overseeing and editing a database of articles and photos. Indeed, in the course of most days, I had to serve in myriad capacities—as researcher, writer, computer programmer, database manager, personal counselor, and, last but not least, a kind of encyclopedia revenuer, responsible for hunting down writers and editors who didn't meet deadlines.

My bosses, executive editors Rudy Abramson and Dr. Jean Haskell, were excellent editors and extremely capable, but both lived hundreds of miles away in Virginia. They did final editing (in two rounds) via the U.S. mail, passed down appropriate edicts as needed, but the day-to-day management of the project and the overseeing of staff were my job. As the years passed, I realized there were those within and outside the university who felt the work was moving too slowly, that perhaps it was too big an undertaking. The text originally contained thirty-four sections, each one containing from twenty-five to more than one hundred articles. Even if each one took only three months to compile, assess, edit, fact-check, proof, correct, and lay out, this process alone would have taken eight and a half years. The project ended officially with a total of thirty sections and took about seven years. Three years previous had been devoted to organizing editorial boards, finding the fifty section editors, lining up a publisher, and securing seed money. The entire process took about ten years. Anything short of a decade would have likely resulted in a much lesser product.

As the work moved forward, I felt an odd kinship with others associated with the region who had struggled against overwhelming odds—such people as Min Lurye Matheson, who led the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in northern Pennsylvania, and Mother Jones, who rallied

laborers to defend their rights and health against abusive and uncaring industries. There was also the young soldier, Jessica Lynch, from Palestine, West Virginia, who dared to be truthful about her "rescue" from Iraq, even as the media and military padded the incident with erroneous details. I mentally aligned myself with these and other brave souls.

Thankfully, the encyclopedia staff with whom I worked was a talented and tenacious group. Rudy Abramson, a native Appalachian who had served many years as a Washington, D.C., correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, was an amazing writer and editor, but he was also annoyingly critical, sort of a "Simon Cowell" among encyclopedia editors. He was blunt and sometimes seemingly cruel in his assessment of articles, but I can say with certainty that it was because of this perseverance and honesty that the book is what it is—a compelling and amazingly well-written work.

Dr. Jean Haskell, on the other hand, was the calm diplomat who always kept her eye on the "big picture," even when operations seemed to be sputtering to a halt.

Together, this duo was the yin and yang that led me through an encyclopedia wilderness.

The in-house staff, hired in 2002, three years into the process, brought new energy to daily operations. Troy Gowen, a former military man who had studied journalism in Alaska, quickly became my confidant and right-hand person. More than ten years my junior, Troy was adept at technical aspects such as the handling of jpegs and the mechanics of setting up Internet posting sites. Over time, we developed an unspoken bond that only comes from having gone through difficult times and survived.

Susan Grove-DeJarnett was hired as photo editor. A native of Pittsburgh who had worked as a newsletter editor for the United Methodist Church, she became our office guru on copyright law and photo research. This woman is the most tenacious person I have ever met. She meticulously tracked down obscure photos and obtained copyright permissions with dogged persistence. Often, we would stare at her in exasperation and say, "Is getting that signature absolutely necessary? Isn't this in public domain, for heaven's sake?"

But she always went the extra step—and I mean always—resolute in her clarity that photos must have permission signatures even if it meant tracking down defunct organizations or distant relatives of photographers. I'm grateful that Susan was a member of our team.

My main researchers or fact checkers—sometimes referred to off-handedly as "fat checkers" or something similar—Clara Hasbrouck, a retired media service director for the Sullivan County Schools, and Phyllis Crain, a former school teacher in Washington County, also plowed through their tasks like demons. A fact wasn't "officially checked" until it had been found in at least three sources, and we preferred that only one of these be the Internet. I'm sure the process was more than tedious, but my "fat checkers" never faltered.

Indeed, the making and publication of an *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, a challenge undertaken with courage and faith by ETSU President Dr. Paul Stanton and members of his administration, is truly important work. Thanks to those who funded the book, the University of Tennessee Press for believing in us, and all those who contributed their knowledge and writing abilities.

As I examine the book's pages, I am proud to be an Appalachian. ❖

Jill Oxendine was managing editor of the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* and has been a freelance copywriter and editor in the Tri-Cities region of Tennessee for more than twenty-five years. The former editor of *Storytelling Magazine*, she is currently doing grant writing for Mountain States Health Alliance and assignments for Hillhouse Graphic Design, TCI Group, and the International Storytelling Center.

FITTING IN

Continued from page 33

Architecture tells a story.
It is not simply design and structure.

Nothing symbolizes the continuity of the past with the present and the power of local identity better than the Newport Agricultural Fair. It enacts what the Historic District recognizes and honors. Established in 1936, the fair has become a community homecoming attended mainly by people with some present or past connection to Newport. It celebrates both the present—what people still do and care about—and the past—the community's agricultural heritage and its sense of continuity and identity.

For a long time, the fair was organized and run by insiders who lived in and around Newport for decades, many of them descended from old families. Not so long ago, the Board of Directors added a few newcomers. I was one, and I understood my place. I participated on behalf of the natives and their vision of things and also to preserve the place where I had come to live. I was helpful but not necessary. Even with this most traditional community event, insiders and outsiders collaborate, but the natives clearly lead and control.

The Question—One More Time

My questions and my anxieties continue. Do we or did we fit in? I understand better than I once did. There are two basic communities in Newport and Clover Hollow. One includes natives and excludes newcomers. As much as a woman like Dorothy Domermuth has done for Newport, she is still only a "nifty newcomer."

The other comes and goes. It is based on a community of interest—on the community's interests—and brings insiders and outsiders together to address specific projects and problems. These groups suspend the basic difference between natives and newcomers—but only temporarily and selectively. A community of interest might function for years—ten in the case of COPE; six for the Historic District group. But basic distinctions remain.

A third community of newcomers alone might be emerging. If so, it will be a loose one with no history and no sense of identity comparable to what the natives of Newport and Clover Hollow share. These new residents spend time with one another and share common interests in work and family. They talk with their native neighbors and learn from them. They seem, however, less invested in the history and current issues of Newport and Clover Hollow. Over time, a "third" community could change the Hollow definitively and make it primarily a rural residential community and no longer a serious agricultural one. At that point, the Historic District might be just a memory or a museum. Barbara and I could belong to the second—the periodic and selective kind of community—and bond in a sense with both natives and other newcomers for the period of the project. In that way we fit in. We could respect, learn, and even understand the community of insiders but never belong to it. We were in that place but not truly of it.

Architecture tells a story. It is not simply design and structure. Three Meadow Mountain refers to the region's traditional architecture and thereby incorporates that story and says something, as well, about our own interests. It tells—as I am trying to tell here—the story of newcomers entering a well-defined domain,

searching for ways to participate in its life, and seeking a home.

Barbara and I tell stories about the past and present of Newport and Clover Hollow, but each story is new because their stories are now part of ours, and ours are becoming a part of theirs. Several years ago, Barbara wrote and produced *The Newport Play* and then shot a movie based on it. She cast both almost exclusively with natives. The play was performed at the annual Harvest Festival at the Community Center before an audience of over 200 people who gave it a standing ovation. They applauded their friends and also applauded themselves. This was their history. These were their stories. Barbara participated with them in honoring and dramatizing Newport. She also interpreted that history, gave it a fresh form, and thereby introduced something new.

As for me, I have recorded hours and hours of insiders and outsiders on tape. I have studied the history. I have written essays about Newport and Clover Hollow. This may be my only distinctive way of "protecting and articulating the place" I was given—to be who I am and use what I have. I didn't belong to the community of insiders, and in the end I belonged only partially to the communities of interest that brought the two together. I stand apart because I write about them. I learned the natives' histories and why newcomers move there. At the same time, I speak about personal, artistic, and intellectual lives beyond the hollow. So too this house. It pays homage to its predecessors but simultaneously engages with an architecture and a world beyond Clover Hollow.

The question of "fitting in" might have no definitive or unambiguous answer. It was sometimes "yes" in the case of the second community and definitely "no" for the insider community. It might have been "yes" if there is in fact a newcomers' community developing, but that's not why we went to Clover Hollow. At other times, the answer was, "I couldn't tell." And that may be the best reply. ❖

Fred Carlisle lived in Clover Hollow, near Newport, Virginia, for ten years. He was the provost and then a professor of English at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg. He has been writing about the history and people of the village and hollow for some time. His essays have appeared in such publications as the *Appalachian Journal*, *Appalachian Heritage*, the *Centennial Review*, and *Now & Then*.

AN APPRECIATION OF THE STONEMAN FAMILY

By JACK TOTTLE

I had the great fortune to hear the Stoneman Family perform many times in Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C., in their early years. I also had the honor of playing with Patsy Stoneman's band on a couple of occasions at the Charles Hotel in Hughesville, Maryland, and also, much later, to present Patsy and Roni with a Lifetime Achievement Award, bestowed upon the Stoneman Family by the International Bluegrass Music Association.

I'll never forget Donna Stoneman. She was an amazing mandolin player who consistently demonstrated taste, speed, virtuosity, and imagination. She was quite an inspiration to me when I was first learning to play, and I would watch her fingers like a hawk. Thinking it over, I believe Donna was probably the first woman to play dazzlingly hot bluegrass mandolin.

Her sister Roni was a remarkably solid and driving bluegrass banjo picker, perhaps

A Stoneman Family publicity photo, circa 1947, from the Stoneman Family Collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.

the first woman to perform professionally at such a high level. Many people remember Roni from the television series *Hee Haw*. She played Ida Lee Nagger, an acid-tongued housewife who convulsed millions. Since Roni was, and still is, quite an attractive woman, the makeup crew must have had to work hard to make Ida Lee look so frumpy.

Ernest V. "Pop" Stoneman and his wife Hattie, of Galax, Virginia, were the mother and father of this musical family. Pop scored a major country music hit in 1925 with his enduring song "The Titanic" and recorded on many other occasions, including the 1927 Bristol Sessions, where the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers made their first records.

Van Stoneman was the smooth lead singer and guitarist on much of the family's material. Jimmy Stoneman was the bass-playing rock on which the band rested musically, and he could take his share of dynamic bass solos as well. At each show Pop Stoneman periodically sang one or more of his oldtime pre-bluegrass hits. Patsy Stoneman sang, played guitar and autoharp, and acted as the group's "den mother" as well as family historian for many years.

Perhaps the most flamboyant of this dynamic band, whose distinctively innovative playing could hold the noisiest club crowd in rapt and appreciative silence, was Scott Stoneman. Most of us who heard Scott—during his years with the Stonemans and during his much shorter tenure with Roland and Clarence White and the Kentucky Colonels—listened in awe and disbelief to the wild, non-stop energy that emanated from his instrument—music at once shocking in its originality and awe-inspiring in its brilliance and precision.

The Stonemans knew what it took to capture the attention and affection of an audience, and their recordings and videos still reverberate with the excitement generated by their live performances.

We are indeed fortunate that many of the Stoneman treasures, both musical and historical, now form a special collection at the Archives of Appalachia, located in the Sherrod Library on the East Tennessee State University campus. ❖

Jack Tottle is director emeritus and founder of the East Tennessee State University Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Program. His widely-praised album of new original compositions, *The Bluegrass Sound* (Copper Creek), includes a musical tribute entitled "The Legend of Scott Stoneman."

Roni Stoneman, Patsy Stoneman Murphy, and Donna Stoneman perform at the Paramount Theater, Bristol, Tennessee. Photo by Jim Sledge, ETSU Photo Lab.

I CAN HANDLE CRAZY

Reagan Boggs Tuned by HooDoos and Carbon Blue

By WAYNE WINKLER

Reagan Boggs knows she's in a tough business. "The music business is hard," she says. "There are a lot more disappointments than highs in this business. There are, on the average, eighty independent projects released every day. The record labels are bombarded with talent."

Reagan Boggs has achieved a measure of local notoriety in the Tri-Cities Tennessee-Virginia region, through her work with bands such as the HooDoos and Carbon Blue. But the Pound, Virginia, native has confidence that her latest release, *Never Looking Behind*, is the best work of her career and hopes it will attract some attention in the music business. So far, her efforts seem to be paying off. In February, *Never Looking Behind* made it onto the Americana music charts, which in turn will boost radio airplay. After numerous projects that helped hone her talents but failed to advance her career, Reagan believes this is her best shot yet. "I really feel like this is one I can build on—a milestone, if you will."

Reagan Boggs was born into a musical family, and recalls, "Those are the best memories I have of growing up." Her mother and father enjoyed playing and singing songs by Johnny Cash and Loretta Lynn, and friends and family would play and sing late into the night. Young Reagan was often brought out of bed to sing for company: "Even on school

Reagan Boggs, a native of Pound, Virginia, calls her latest CD Never Looking Behind *the best work of her career. Photo by Paul Bishop.*

nights—I probably missed a lot of school because of that," she laughs.

Although she asserts that music "was always what I wanted to do," she was a bit reluctant to make a stage debut. Her mother entered seven-year-old Reagan in a beauty pageant and talent show. "She had me in this little cowboy hat, and I had this little leather vest and buckskin and cowboy boots and all that. I was shaking and I probably did awful. I was really nervous." Reagan's mother continued to enter her daughter in talent shows and other venues, and eventually Reagan developed confidence in her abilities.

As a teenager, Reagan's main musical interests tended toward country and bluegrass, particularly the Seldom Scene and the Country Gentlemen. However, her parents had an eclectic record collection ranging from Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings to the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. Reagan spent hours in her room listening to old records, absorbing a wide range of musical influences.

As a seventeen-year-old high school senior, she journeyed to Marlow's Country Palace in Pikeville, Kentucky. "Marlow had a six- or seven-piece band, and we went over to listen to them. If he finds out somebody can sing or something, he'll let you get up and play with his band. I had my guitar with me—imagine that!—and I had gotten there a little early and worked up a couple of songs with his band. The next thing you know, I was there every other weekend, and it started to be a regular thing."

Although Reagan had played in various pick-up bands in high school, the band at Marlow's Country Palace challenged her to expand her musical horizons to include music by the likes of Melissa Etheridge and Bonnie Raitt. "It was more rock and contemporary blues, and after I got into it, I realized, 'Hey, I'm good at this—or I could be.'"

At nineteen, Reagan went into a studio in Pippa Passes, Kentucky, to record some original songs. "The songs were decent, but I had just gotten out of vocal training, so my voice was [affects basso profundo voice] really deep because my teacher had told me to open my mouth. It just sounded really bad. It took me a while to balance out the vocal training with what came naturally."

After college, Reagan heard a band at Rush Street Grill in Kingsport, Tennessee, called Pot Luck Blues. "The place was so crowded the only place we could find to sit was right in front of the band. I was humming along with some of the songs, and during the break, Greg Dykes said, 'I noticed you know the words to a lot of these songs. Are you a singer?'" During the last set, the band called Reagan up to sing the Bonnie Raitt song "Love Me Like a Man." After she finished, Dykes said, "I want to talk to you before you leave."

Reagan joined the band which became the HooDoos. After some personnel changes, the other members of the band included Greg Dykes, Gary Redden, and Mark Gage. "They were pretty adamant about sticking to the blues format, so I started building into blues and finding new artists like Shemekia Copeland, Susan Tedeschi, Johnny Lang, Debbie Davies, and Marcia Ball. I played with the HooDoos for four years, and we stuck to the blues for the whole time."

Before the HooDoos, Reagan's guitar playing had been mostly on acoustic instruments. Strapping on a Stratocaster and fronting a high-octane blues band was a new and rewarding experience, adding new

Reagan Boggs, heavily lipsticked, sings at age nine on a Pound, Virginia, stage. Photo courtesy Reagan Boggs.

colors and tones to her repertoire. But as other obligations claimed the attention of the HooDoos, the band eventually fell apart. By this time, Reagan was eager to work with original material.

Reagan had been writing songs since age twelve, although she dismisses some of her earlier efforts. "I was writing stupid songs. I would sit down at the tape recorder and go on and on and on, back when I was eight or nine years old. I was putting together cassettes for my Mamaw, and there was stuff on there about buying her a vacuum cleaner. It was awful! I'd always had a big imagination, but I didn't start writing anything that kind of had the structure of a real song until I was about twelve or fourteen."

I told him I don't want it polished; I don't want you going in with your computer and fixing every little glitch.

"I can't remain idle as far as my music goes," asserts Reagan. "I get extremely restless." That restlessness led her to write the song "I Can Handle Crazy," which she recorded with a new band, Carbon Blue. The members of Carbon Blue came from varied musical backgrounds and added a more hard-edged rock sound to Reagan's blues- and country-tinged original material. After working together for nearly two years, Carbon Blue finally recorded a CD, *I Can Handle Crazy*—only to break up two months after its release.

"After I really listened to the Carbon Blue tracks, I felt like a lot of the music that was put with those songs didn't match the lyrics. I spent a year after Carbon Blue just working on solo stuff, writing, taking a look at what I'd done." A visit to the Orange Peel, a popular club in Asheville, North Carolina, provided an inspiration through the music of Mindy Smith. "I just started listening to her music, and all the different instrumentation she had behind her, and I felt that kind of music really fit the style of songs I write. I spent a year after Carbon Blue broke up just doing solo stuff, working on writing."

With a batch of new songs, Reagan set out to put together a band. "I had wanted bluegrass instrumentation in there, so I got (multi-instrumentalist) Jason Crawford, a well-known bluegrass player around the area." She had definite ideas about the drum sound she wanted as well and chose veteran drummer Alan Gamble. With Greg Smith on guitar, Kevin White on bass, and David Cate on keyboard, Reagan had assembled some of the best and most versatile musicians in the region. They spent nearly nine months working her songs into band arrangements and "road testing" the songs at local venues.

Meanwhile, Reagan met Eric Fritsch, a member of Scott Miller's band Commonwealth who had produced a release for Rob Russell, and they discussed working together. "I told him I wanted it to have a country core, because that's what it is, but I didn't want it to be mainstream, 'CMT' country." She also wanted an authentic sound. "I told him I don't want it polished; I don't want you going in with your computer and fixing every little glitch. I want it to be honest."

Fritsch used veteran Nashville musicians in his studio and played several instruments himself. Park Chilsholm played bass, with Matt Crouse on drums and Sarah Beck providing additional vocals. Fritsch brought in a couple of big names for the project: Nashville Bluegrass Band member Stuart Duncan and steel guitarist Al Perkins, who has played with everyone from the Flying Burrito Brothers to the Rolling Stones.

The result was *Never Looking Behind*, released in January 2006. The CD contains nine of Reagan's original songs, as well as covers of Scott Melton's "The Way I'm Lovin' You," Jay Farrar's "Tear Stained Eye," and the classic Johnny Cash-June Carter duet "Jackson," a song Reagan remembers her parents singing together.

The original songs are a true Americana blend of styles and influences, all rendered with Reagan's unique touch. "Share Them

With You" is a powerful up-tempo opening track, expressing a desire to share the everyday joys of life with a loved one. "Wrong Last Name" has the feel of a mountain ballad and is based on a true story about a woman whose child is fathered by a man not her husband. While all the songs have a country feel, none are, in Reagan's words, "mainstream, 'CMT' country." The songs reflect Reagan's varied tastes and experiences, and the sound is uniquely her own.

Her mission now is to get the music heard. Shortly after the release of *Never Looking Behind*, the CD entered the Americana Music Association charts. A full-time business systems analyst and programmer with Penn Virginia Corporation in Kingsport, Reagan accepts as many gigs as her job will allow, playing solo or with various combinations of her working band. With the help of some friends, she is for the most part self-managed. "At this level in the music business, it's not really feasible for someone to take you on as a manager or as a booking agent. It's not going to really be worth their while."

Live performances in the region, along with airplay on Americana radio stations like WETS and WDVX, are helping to spread the word about Reagan Boggs. *Never Looking Behind* is the best representation so far of who she is and what her music is all about. "I'm going to do whatever it takes to get it heard. There's always a chance that nothing will happen, but I did my best and I'll continue to do my best. And there'll be another album coming out in 2007 or 2008."

But Reagan is confident and hopeful about the prospects for *Never Looking Behind*. "When I was sitting in the studio with Al Perkins," she recalls, "he said, 'You know, you're really good. You could be the next Linda Ronstadt.' That's quite a compliment coming from him—he's played with Linda Ronstadt!"

Reagan Boggs' Web site, which she created herself, is www.reaganboggs.com. ❖

Wayne Winkler, music editor for *Now & Then*, manages public radio station WETS-FM on the campus of East Tennessee State University, where he has hosted *Blue Monday*, a weekly blues program, since 1985. He is the author of the book *Walking Toward the Sunset: The Melungeons of Appalachia*.

A New Leaf

(Blue Chip)

Lightnin' Charlie

Between raising a family and making a living as a working musician, it took Charlie Dollinger nearly three years to create his latest release, *A New Leaf*. It was worth the wait. Two previous CDs by Lightnin' Charlie and his band the Upsetters were well-executed blues releases, but *A New Leaf* presents Dollinger at his best. From the opening track, a cover of Magic Sam's "You Don't Love Me," *A New Leaf* positively jumps with the energy longtime "Lightnin' Bugs" have come to expect from his live performances. The tracks were painstakingly created over time, adding local musical lights including Ron Baisden, George Hammonds, Todd Levine, and Jason Lloyd to create a rich, full-bodied sound. The disc includes a good mix of Lightnin' Charlie originals, along with covers from Walter Jacobs, Roscoe Gordon, Carl Perkins, Dave Alvin, Jesse Stone, and Mel London. Like the late Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Lightnin' Charlie resists being labeled simply a "blues artist"; his work mines many rich veins of American music, including traditional gospel. But like Gatemouth, Lightnin' Charlie has his roots firmly planted in the fertile soil of American blues. What he does with that sound is completely his own. ❖

Sushi & Gravy

(Shami)

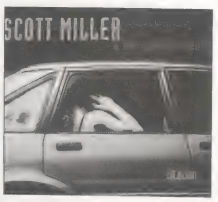
The Last Frontier

The East Tennessee State University Bluegrass program has turned out some very talented performers, including Kenny Chesney and Becky Buller. These student musicians have taken traditional Appalachian music around the world, and now the world is beginning to find its way to ETSU. Takeharu Kunimoto came to ETSU from Japan to learn the finer points of bluegrass music, and the result is the album *Sushi and Gravy*, featuring Kunimoto and members of the ETSU Bluegrass Band playing under the name The Last Frontier: J. P. Mathes (banjo), Daniel Boner (guitar and vocals), Aaron Jackson (mandolin and vocals), Ken Thomas (bass), and a guest appearance by Raymond McLain on fiddle and clawhammer banjo. Kunimoto plays the shamisen, which sounds like a cross between a banjo and a mandolin. The songs range from traditional Ralph Stanley and Delmore Brothers bluegrass to originals by Kunimoto, Mathes, and McLain. Many of the basic tracks were recorded at ETSU's public radio station WETS and remixed at Sonic Studio in Japan. The sound is unmistakably Appalachian, but with a decidedly Asian overtone. Appalachian people proudly claim bluegrass as their own native music, but with artists like Kunimoto making their mark on the music scene, we're learning to share this music with the rest of the world. ❖

Citation

(Sugar Hill)

Scott Miller and The Commonwealth



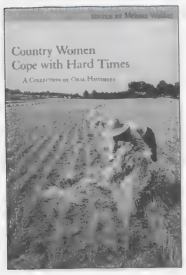
The new release from Scott Miller, *Citation*, will not disappoint longtime fans. Miller, a Virginia native who began his musical career as a solo artist, later helped form the influential V-Roys, went solo again, and is now backed by the very talented band The Commonwealth. Miller's music always has a sense of time ("Freedom is a Stranger"), place (the Fort Sanders area of Knoxville, Tennessee, where he wrote the songs), and history ("Say Ho" is the story of Sam Houston). The album was produced by Memphis legend Jim Dickinson and covers emotions ranging from pessimism and fatalism to optimism and hope. The Commonwealth—keyboardist Eric Fritsch (see Reagan Boggs feature), bassist Jeremy Pennebaker, and drummer Shawn McWilliams—welcomes vocalist Reba Russell for a guest appearance. *Citation*, Miller's third release on the Sugar Hill label, gives us what we want from this talented artist. ❖

Tulips for Lunch

(Chuck Brodsky)

Chuck Brodsky

Singer, songwriter, and storyteller Chuck Brodsky has released another collection of poignant songs about a variety of unforgettable characters, from a member of a prison baseball team to famed 1970s skyjacker D. B. Cooper to "Murderous Mary," the elephant hanged in Erwin, Tennessee, in 1916. The Philadelphia native, who now resides in Asheville, North Carolina, continues his musical passion with baseball. In addition to "Death Row All Stars," Brodsky opens the disc with "Curse of the Billy Goat," recounting the legendary 1945 incident in which the owner of Chicago's Billy Goat Tavern, Bill Sianis, was not permitted to bring his pet goat into Wrigley Field for a World Series game. Of course, the Cubs have not been in a World Series since—the result, some say, of the curse Sianis put on the team. The rest of *Tulips for Lunch* is filled with stories and characters Brodsky depicts with compassion and affection. ❖



Country Women Cope with Hard Times: A Collection of Oral Histories

Edited by Melissa Walker

University of South Carolina Press
Columbia, South Carolina, 2004
$39.95 (hardcover), 230 pages

Historian Gerda Lerner was right: "All human beings are practicing historians," so it is appropriate that Melissa Walker includes Lerner's words as a chapter epigraph in her collection of oral histories, *Country Women Cope with Hard Times*. Her meticulously edited collection will appeal to the widest possible audience: Both oral historians and scholars of the mountains will appreciate her final thoughts on using oral historical evidence, and upcountry folk will enjoy reading the narratives to spark their own memories of days gone by.

Historians have given considerable attention to documenting the transformation of twentieth-century Southern agriculture, but often the stories they tell cannot reveal the impact on ordinary folk—especially women. Having grown up on an East Tennessee dairy farm, Melissa Walker is perfectly suited to fill this gap. Invoking historian Rhys Isaac's words, Walker hopes to reveal these women's "values, hopes and dreams, disappointments and setbacks." She accomplishes this goal admirably through the memory bearers she interviewed.

The women interviewed were all born between 1890 and 1940 and lived in either East Tennessee or upstate South Carolina when she was actively collecting memories between 1992 and 1998. Once the interview was transcribed, she returned the transcript to each narrator to get her corrections as well as responses from a family history questionnaire. She then set out to turn each question-and-answer transcript into a seamless narrative with occasional annotations. As an honest researcher, Walker includes correspondence with several of the women, and these letters show the esteem they have for Walker's sensitivity and interest. Most of the women were landowners, and all were white; Walker admits to having had difficulty locating black women. Her reasons may not satisfy all, but she has written elsewhere about race and gender. And she also attends to skeptics who may question comparing two such seemingly different regions. Admitting her geographic focus is due to accident of residence, she declares the two regions to be fairly similar in their academic histories.

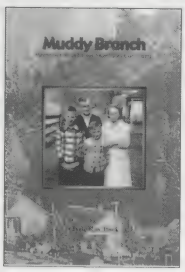
The reader will quickly learn that these women never lived in a "Golden Age" of agriculture; most grew up on farms that were always a hailstorm or drought away from economic ruin. Yet the testimonies report bounteous tables and warm communal relations. After the Great Depression and World War II, as agriculture's commercialization emerged, new choices dawned for farm women. Some sojourned between farm and town or city, others hunkered down and determined to make a go of farming with new methods, while some left farming for wage labor. But, as these memories reveal, women always "made do," contributing four types of work to the farmstead: reproductive (work that nurtured people in the household), productive (work that made goods for home and market), field work, and mutual aid.

Walker's edited collection is not composed merely of strung pearls; her introductions are a thread that weaves all of the narratives into a rich yet homespun piece of cloth that will delight, sadden, educate, and connect readers with a way of life that seems foreign in spite of its rather recent disappearance. For example, Wilma Cope Williamson reports that her "grandmother could use everything about a hog except his squeal": "Granny taught me to cook. Who else? Who taught me to do everything? Who taught me to crochet? Who taught me to quilt? If you needed it, she either raised it or made it." And often one can hear voices through reading, such as when Korola Neville Lee asks, "Did anybody tell you about carbide light? Well, it's c-a-r-b-i-d-e, carbide." But these narratives also reveal the values of the narrators and underscore the moral imperative of studying history. "I was talking to a friend of mine the other day," Williamson explains. "We (both) lived there up in the mountains—and we were just wondering, how would young people react now if they had to start out like we did?"

Walker notes that oral memories are reconstructions, "shaped by subsequent events in the narrator's life, by the society in which the narrator lives, by the interaction with the interviewer, by concerns about who might be listening, and by the narrator's perceptions of the world in which she lives today." To emphasize the problematic nature of oral histories, however, is to miss the richness of these gems. Short of sitting on the porch talking with these farm wom-

en, we have Walker's collection as the next best thing. ❖

Chad Berry is associate professor of history at Maryville College in Tennessee and the author of *Southern Migrants, Northern Exiles* (Illinois, 2000). He is the 2006-2007 president of the Appalachian Studies Association.



Muddy Branch: Memories of an Eastern Kentucky Coal Camp
By Clyde Roy Pack

Jesse Stuart Foundation
Ashland, Kentucky, 2003
$15.00 (paperback), 249 pages

Muddy Branch: Memories of an Eastern Kentucky Coal Camp ends with "memories that make me glad I was a coal camp kid," Clyde Roy Pack's hypothesis for his memoir. The stories, which appeared first in Pack's weekly column in Kentucky's *Paintsville Herald*, are loosely collected into chapters of common themes such as family, education, religion, people, sports, and dreams. The stories are filtered through a child's eye with the warmest of recollection even against a backdrop of World War II when men aged seventeen to thirty were noticeably missing, before running water and indoor bathrooms, alongside mine collapses and daily dread.

Pack is realistic about the hardships of living in Thealka, a coal camp in the 1940s, but focuses on the benefits and enrichment of his life. He came from "a hardy generation of survivors, coal miner's kids, who know the meaning of hard work; who are doing whatever is necessary to ensure a better life for their own children; and who will forever appreciate the sacrifices of parents who struggled in an industry that demanded so much."

The memoir's central theme is community, yet there are several references to the "outsiders" who from time to time showed unexpected and unnecessary pity. Although Pack enjoyed the generosity of the students from Pippa Passes who brought Christmas gifts each year, he had no idea why they did it. He reveals his oblivion to a poverty President Johnson later declared war on.

Pack calls *Muddy Branch* the antithesis to Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*. Although *Muddy Branch* is devoid of the hopelessness and misery that characterized *Angela's Ashes*, the memoirs share humor in what could be called humorless situations. Pack achieves his goal of allowing readers to join him on Society Row (one of many names for Thealka) and laughing along with him through his use of rich details and vivid, sensory descriptions. For instance, the fifth-grade bully, Patsy Puckett, had "rusty knuckles and crusty knees." While he's got us at school he lets us smell the "freshly oiled floors mixed with the scent of new crayons and stale textbooks."

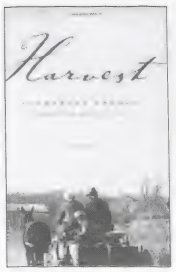
It's this common bond we feel as a reader, regardless of childhoods, that makes the book so appealing. Like most folks, he wore a bathrobe and towel on his head as a Wise Man in the Christmas play, and his teachers encouraged and inspired him to go to college. Lessons in love were no different. Pack created a heart-felt Valentine with Gene Autry drawn on the front that read, "I'm yourn, You're mine, Won't you bee, My Valentine?" Followed by flat rejection he concluded: "Roses are better than cowboys, and never mess with older women."

His subtle observation and humor run through every chapter. A deep question that captures Pack's sense of humor arose from a chapter about food, "Coal-Camp Cuisine." He asks, "Is bologna a red meat?" So far that has yet to be answered.

Each chapter houses several anecdotes that both illustrate the uniqueness of that place and time but also remind readers of their own childhood regardless of geography. More poignantly, Pack's concluding reflections result in the realization that our childhood memories are bigger and brighter and often better than what they possibly could have been. A few years ago he settled in for an evening with his childhood hero, Gene Autry. When the television show changed from black and white to color and he saw the Gene of the 1980s in a tight powder-blue suit "whistling his words through dentures that didn't fit," the disappointment of childhood past set in.

Clyde Roy Pack has captured many of these memories, however. Readers can enjoy the Thealka Free Will Baptist Church as it was with the "sweet smell of Juicy Fruit mixed with furniture polish and just a dab of Evening in Paris perfume." ❖

Jackie White Rogers is a fiction writer and educator in Pulaski County, Kentucky. Her prize-winning story, "Her Leg," is forthcoming in *Bloodline: Contemporary and Emerging Kentucky Writers*.



Harvest
By Catherine Landis

Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's
New York, New York, 2004
$23.95 (hardcover), 338 pages

What happens to a Tennessee family farm when it is worn out by too much corn, then taken over by the Tennessee Valley Authority snatching up acres for a dam while "driving people to ragged land all over east Tennessee"?

What happens to a similar farm decades later when it becomes "an island in an asphalt sea" surrounded by "scars of earth never meant to be laid open . . . thin boards of cheap houses," and the greatest of insults, a Wal-Mart?

These are the questions and this is the setting for Catherine Landis's second novel, *Harvest*. But a book about land is nothing more than a treatise on conservation with social issues lying fallow until readers meet the characters that humanize the farm. The compelling question in this memorable novel is not what happens—a subject that, in fact, is answered in the first sentence—but who it happens to and how complex and conflicted Appalachian family members react to change and ultimately to each other.

In a three-part structure titled "Flood," "Fire," and "Fallow," the story also features three viewpoints: a father, a son, and a wife. One is a farmer, one becomes a farmer, and one disdains farming while ultimately living on the farm. The narrative remains distanced, however, since only one character comes close to finding a direct and intimate voice; instead, the reader sees what the characters cannot confess or articulate themselves.

The most inarticulate is Arliss Greene, whose most passionate moments occur when he is a young child who first must say goodbye to the family farm being overtaken by the TVA and then must watch his beloved sister catch on fire and die. When a few years later Arliss sees his father die from being trampled by his own cattle, Arliss decides to "ha[ve] a way with cows" and to "stuff" back emotions until "he [gets] good at it." Arliss works the land tirelessly by creating a farm from nothing but rocks, two ramshackle houses, and a graveyard. He treats his cows with more understanding than he extends to his wife Merle or his sons, Bob and Daniel. However, Merle and Bob seem to escape Arliss's emotional wilderness by rejecting his commitment to cows. Merle has a "made-up mind" that rejects anything complicated, including any sense of past and even makes the cows nervous; instead, her life is filled with God, the University of Tennessee Volunteers, and her job at Carr's Big Orange, in that order. Bob seems to follow in his father's footsteps by helping out on the farm but switches his major from agriculture to business after he enrolls at UT, then eventually and ironically becomes a land developer.

Daniel's escape from the family farm and family expectations is much more dramatic, much less clear even though he is a professional writer and the novel's second of three narrators. As "the biggest show-off there is" who is "always talking," Daniel vows to "[s]crew expectations," "step . . . out of his parents' world to make his own life," and never "get lost." As a literature student and later an academic and want-to-be writer, he fails to see the ironic and even tragic connection of authors like Thoreau or Hemingway to himself. He devotes himself to the study of George Washington Harris, "an almost-forgotten nineteenth-century Tennessee writer" and later, bizarre and aborted writing projects like *Caramel Dreams* rather than writing the Appalachian story playing out before him on the family farm. Ultimately, Daniel forsakes his naive dream of "the world as it ought to be" by sacrificing his marriage, his career, his hazy and misplaced goals, all because "sometimes it's easier to delude yourself."

The third narrator, the one without apparent illusions, is Leda, Daniel's wife, who emerges as the novel's center and soul. She is the one who seems most concerned with preserving the family and farm as she first raises another generation of Greenes, Hannah and Andy, and then responds admirably to Arliss's request one day for help. She learns all about "the mythology of bulls" and cows, respects hay's ability "to assert itself," and seeks to preserve both the family's past and future. Her birthing a breech calf is a moment of triumph even though she demurs, "It's no big deal when you get used to it." Through his daughter-in-law, Arliss can protect and preserve all that he has worked for, avoid further suburban encroachment, and not move to Florida.

When Bob is trying to convince his father to sell the property, he ironically asserts, "There's a way to look at this issue that's not black-and-white." *Harvest* is a novel that suc-

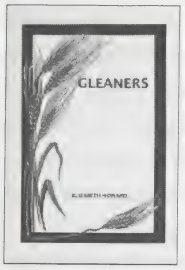
ceeds because it moves beyond the simple "black-and-white" of issues facing our region from conservation to farming to economic development to the place of the family. The skillful story rejects the easy, the obvious, the facile in favor of a much more rewarding resolution of survivorship and readjustment of dreams and hopes in the face of stunning rejection and loss.

Catherine Landis's second novel provides a satisfying read for those looking for a real story, a real family who struggles against both modern and age-old choices for which there are no easy answers. ❖

Kathy Griffith Fish grew up as a town girl in a farming community outside Kansas City, Missouri. She teaches English, American literature, women's literature, and linguistics at the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Kentucky.

Books in Brief

Family is the theme that never fails in Appalachian poetry. Mountain poets have spent the last century writing verse on how families are made and unmade, the impact of Appalachian ancestors, sibling rivalry, and a poet's own place within the family. Poets never run out of fuel when reflecting on family, and readers nearly always identify with this universal theme. Here are six new collections of poems by writers connected to the Appalachian region who have highlighted family relations in their latest work.



Gleaners
By Elizabeth Howard

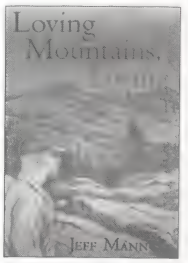
Grandmother Earth
Cordova, Tennessee, 2005
$10.00 (paper), 76 pages

Tennessee poet Elizabeth Howard's second collection achieves a familial sense by taking the reader on surprising journeys to meet family, neighbors, and ghosts. Traveling between past and present, Howard's haunting poems are tempered with an arresting attention to nature, animals, and the workings of the human heart. In a prayer for a "child of promise" now ravaged by schizophrenia, for instance, the speaker/mother beseeches God to "mute the voices. / Let him hear killdeer pipe at dawn, / leaves clatter across cobblestones, / a tree frog trill for rain, / the splash of bass feeding." ❖

Late Wife
By Claudia Emerson

Louisiana State University Press
Baton Rouge, 2005
$16.95 (paper), 54 pages

Claudia Emerson's third collection follows the arc of love through one failed marriage into a new one where the speaker is haunted by possessions belonging to her partner's late wife—photographs, a daybook, a driving glove, a quilt. Emerson, a Chatham, Virginia, native, also includes poems directed to her parents and grandparents. In "Second Bearing, 1919," Emerson recounts a family story about a peach tree that bore fruit out of season after it was charred in a fire. The peach flesh is much like Emerson's amazing poems in this collection: "the color of cream," without pits, and "endless somehow." ❖



Loving Mountains, Loving Men
By Jeff Mann

Ohio University Press
Athens, 2005
$19.95 (paper), 248 pages

Part of the Ohio University Press Series in Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia, Jeff Mann's collection of poems and essays is the culmination of ten years of writing in which he reconciles "the many complex and often contradictory facets" of his personality. Most notably, Mann's poems and essays address his love for the mountains and his love for men, a love which, up to now, has divided and separated Mann even in his past poetry collections. In this ground-breaking volume, Mann defiantly clings "to both mountain and queer heritage." ❖

Madness Like Morning Glories
By doris davenport

Louisiana State University Press
Baton Rouge, 2005
$18.95 (paper), 58 pages

Performance artist doris davenport's new collection conjures up first-person persona poems spoken by the residents of Soque Street, an African-American community much like davenport's North Georgia home place. Presented as a series of overlapping monologues, the poems provide not only family information about the speaker but also about the other residents of Soque Street, with names as colorful as their lives: Miz Clio, Lutesha Brown, Drunk Dessa, and Mr. Rat. ❖

One Good Hand
By Dana Wildsmith

Iris Press
Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 2005
$14.00 (paper), 95 pages

Frequent *Now & Then* contributor and poet Dana Wildsmith lives with her family, two dogs, and uncounted cats on a 125-year-old family farm in Bethlehem, Georgia. Her poems in this third collection are arranged by seasons and offer poetic reflection on the plight of farming ancient family land in the face of urban development. "Shaping the future that remembers the past," she evokes a South "where Hispanics and Asians, poets and farmers, struggle with new languages and translations," notes poet Robert Morgan. ❖

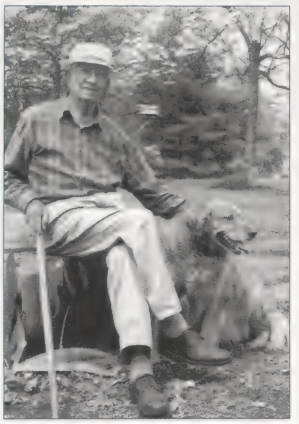
What Travels With Us
By Darnell Arnoult

Louisiana State University Press
Baton Rouge, 2005
$18.95 (paper), 56 pages

Fiction writer Darnell Arnoult has also chosen the theme of family for her debut poetry collection. Arnoult is a third-generation Fieldale resident, the planned community founded in the Virginia foothills by Marshall Field in the early 1900s to support his textile mill. The speakers in Arnoult's poetry collection, real and imagined, are the Appalachian mountain people who populated Fieldale where Arnoult was raised. Kathryn Stripling Byer wrote that "Arnoult's work shows the timing of a storyteller and the emotional range of a singer." ❖

Marianne Worthington is book review editor for *Now & Then*.

U P C O M I N G T A S T E S



"Sweetness on the State Line: A Chronicle of Candy-Making in Bristol, Virginia" will be a featured exhibit at East Tennessee State University's B. Carroll Reece Museum in Johnson City, October 9, 2006, through January 31, 2007. The exhibit is an outgrowth of a class project in the university's "Foodways of Appalachia" course, by Lisa Elliott of Kingsport, a student in the master of arts in liberal studies program. It documents the history of candy companies in Bristol dating to 1909 and is part of Bristol's sesquicentennial celebration. An opening reception will be held Thursday, October 12, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the museum. ❖

Frank Loudy, 94, started his candy company in Bristol, Virginia, at a time when sugar was rationed. His life's work will be highlighted in the ETSU exhibit. Photo courtesy Lisa Elliott.

"KENTUCKY'S SOFT DRINK" TURNS 80

Gingery Refresher Produced by 104-Year-Old Family Business Has Scandinavian Origins

By FRED SAUCEMAN

Soft drinks were invented in the South, and the region still leads the nation in their consumption. The top ten soft-drinking states are all below the Mason-Dixon Line. At a bottling plant in Winchester, Kentucky, the formula for a ginger-flavored beverage has been a family secret for almost eighty years.

Say the name quickly and you get a hint about its origin. Ale-8-One. When the drink was invented in 1926 by George Lee Wainscott, his company had already been in business for twenty-four years, making a cola that attempted to compete with the big boys in the market. Unable to come up with a name he liked for his new drink, Wainscott asked for ideas at the Clark County Fair. The winning entry was from a fourteen-year-old girl, whose name has been lost to time. She submitted "a late one," to describe the latest thing in soft drinks.

"Wainscott punned that down to the play on words, Ale, dash, eight, dash, one. And that's what it's stayed ever since," says

Wainscott's great-great-nephew, Fielding Rogers, now executive vice president of the Ale-8-One Bottling Company.

The business has remained in the same family since 1902, and with the exception of the addition of a diet version in 2003, Ale-8-One hasn't changed since its introduction in the Roaring Twenties.

"Usually I describe it as like a ginger ale but with a lot more flavor," says Rogers. "Some people remark that it has kind of a fruity twist, but it certainly has a lot more bite than just a ginger ale. It's got caffeine in it, which gives it a bit more flavor, and it has different carbonation levels, which I think gives it a lot more taste than normal ginger ale."

Whereas most of the soft drink industry has converted to plastic and metal, Ale-8-One has kept the tradition of selling returnable glass bottles, trucked around central and eastern Kentucky in wooden crates.

"The returnable bottles still make up about a quarter of our sales through this plant," says Rogers, who has a business degree from Washington & Lee University. "The customers really like the bottle. There's a thirty-cent deposit on the bottle, and it's really just kind of an icon associated with Ale-8. A lot of people will swear that the returnable's the best-tasting Ale-8. But the returnable bottle and the non-returnable bottle are made by the same company with the same glass, filled with the same machinery, so I think they taste just the same."

In-store sales, up to now, are limited to Kentucky, a stretch of southern Ohio, and a piece of southern Indiana. Still, the company sells about a million and a half cases a year.

"We ship Ale-8 anywhere in the world via UPS. We have Internet sales, and people all over the world will order Ale-8. Right now we're sending quite a few cases per month to troops in Afghanistan and Iraq."

Ale-8-One is flavored with natural ginger. In the 1920s, Wainscott traveled all over Northern Europe, where he acquired ginger-blended recipes for experimentation. Just as important for the blending of the drink is the purity of the water. It's Winchester city water, but it's filtered through a complex cleansing system.

Rogers notes that Kentuckians are especially partial to the marriage of Ale-8 and one of the state's many Bourbons. In the Rogers household, Ale-8's mixed into waffle and French toast batter as well as the family recipe for chili.

"We take a normal chili recipe with ground sausage, ground beef, beans, and then anytime we have cans with either beans or tomato paste, or tomato sauce, we just rinse the cans out with Ale-8 and then pour it in the chili pot and simmer it down. It just gives it a different kind of flavor that you wouldn't normally expect with chili. I think the ginger cooks in there really well."

Whether cooked into a pot of chili in the fall or quaffed on a hot day in July or August when sales are at their peak, the fizzy, green-bottled product has become known as "Kentucky's soft drink." But the Rogers family is now negotiating with distributors to spread the drink's fruity ginger flavor and its eighty-year history well beyond the borders of the Bluegrass State. ❖

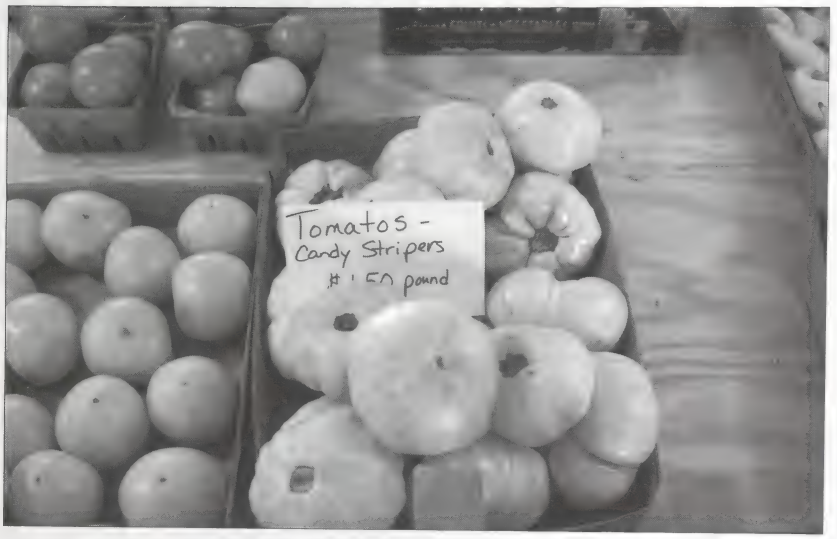
Ale-8-One Bottling Company, Inc.
25 Carol Road
Winchester, Kentucky
859-744-3484

www.ale-8-one.com

Fielding Rogers, executive vice president of the Ale-8-One Bottling Company, Winchester, Kentucky. Photo by Fred Sauceman.

AUNT MARY'S SLICK TOMATO BAKE

By MICHAEL SANFORD



My great-aunt Mary Bodenhammer, nee Moore, one of five sisters and two brothers, was born around 1895 in the Appalachian region of Western North Carolina, near Spruce Pine. She married Adolphus Bodenhammer, an aspiring plumber, in 1915. They lived with her family for several years. Mary and her sisters did the cooking and gardening, along with canning and preserving. Her peach preserves still make my mouth water when I think of them.

Mary and Bodie began their migration when hard times loomed around 1925, first east to Greensboro, North Carolina, then north to Danville, Virginia. They eventually settled in Lorton, Virginia, a small community fifteen miles south of Alexandria.

When Bodie was a journeyman plumber, he and Mary built a rustic, mountain-style log cabin on a twenty-acre plot. They immediately started a large garden. Of the many recipes Aunt Mary shared with friends and family, the one she called "Slick Tomato Bake" sticks in my mind. The ingredients came from her garden, with the exception of a couple of items from the Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company in Alexandria. The "slick tomato" is a reference to the unctuous pods of okra, cut into rounds and included in the tasty concoction.

Photos by Larry Smith, ETSU Photo Lab.

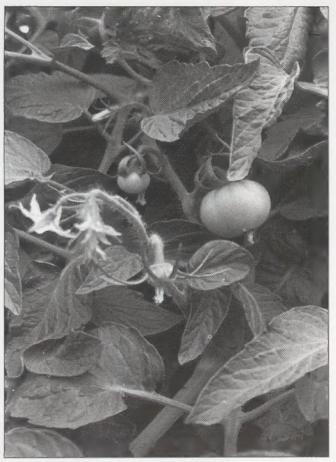
Aunt Mary's Slick Tomato Bake

4 cups stale, cubed bread—homemade or store-bought "light" bread—divided
3 tablespoons butter
1 medium onion, diced
2 cups okra, cut into ¼-inch rounds (or frozen sliced okra)
1¾ cups tomatoes, or a 14-ounce can, strained and juiced and set aside
1½ cups fresh corn cut from the ear or store-bought shoepeg, in a 12-ounce can
Salt and pepper to taste
1 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cut the stale bread into ¾-inch cubes and set aside. In a 10-inch cast-iron skillet, melt the butter and sauté the onion until lightly caramelized. Add the okra and sauté until the "slime" evaporates out. Add the tomato, corn, salt, and pepper.

Add 2 cups bread cubes gradually and work into the mixture until the bread absorbs the moisture. If the mixture becomes too stiff, add small amounts of the reserved tomato juice.

Let the mixture stand for 15 to 20 minutes before baking. Place skillet in preheated oven and bake, uncovered, for 45 minutes or until mixture bubbles.



Crush the remaining stale bread into crumbs in a bag with a rolling pin or wooden mallet. Combine remaining bread crumbs with the cheese and mix well.

Remove the skillet from the oven. Increase the oven temperature to 400 degrees. Sprinkle the bread crumb and cheese mixture over the top of the dish. Return to the oven, uncovered, for 15 to 20 minutes or until the top is crusty and brown. Let stand for 10 minutes prior to serving. ❖

Michael Sanford was born in Alexandria, Virginia. He graduated from Mount Vernon High School in Fairfax County in 1957 and enlisted in the United States Air Force. He was later employed by the Department of Defense and traveled extensively, worldwide, resulting in his love of food and its preparation. He and his wife Vern retired in 1998 and moved to Johnson City, Tennessee, where they seek out local food culture, particularly the array of locally-owned cafés abounding in the region. This recipe was submitted as part of a class project for The Foodways of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University in the spring of 2006.

How Your Finger Speaks to Me

By MARIANNE WORTHINGTON

Now in death your mangled index finger
is hidden from our view, but I search
it out when no one sees. That finger, slashed
open in your childhood when you fell
from the tractor, nearly lost, split through

the nail yet healed by growing apart
like a two-headed snake. That finger, dexterous
as you combed a path through my scalp
or jabbed it toward my contrary mouth
to pull a baby tooth, or wagged it like
a weapon to voice your emphasis:
Those hateful bluejays build
in my maples then swoop
and fuss to beat the band!

Why didn't I watch closer as you pulled
thread from a spool to pursed lips? The slickened
string looping hooks and levers with ease,
you always stabbed the needle first try, breaking
the strand with your teeth. When I fumble at
your Singer, I still hear your coarse whisper
in a gentle curse: *This blamed old bobbin*
never did sit right with me.

Only your doughy fingers can build
these biscuits to bloom atop my chicken
pot pie—your recipe—hen stewed and pulled
from bone, broth thickened with flour water.
You brought the knife so close to that finger
cubing carrots, dicing potatoes and onion,
piercing open a bag of peas, laying it all
under a blanket of black pepper, baked
in your oblong glass casserole. *Now watch it,*
watch it, you'd say, your finger safely
gloved in an oven mitt. *It'll burn right up*
if you don't watch it.

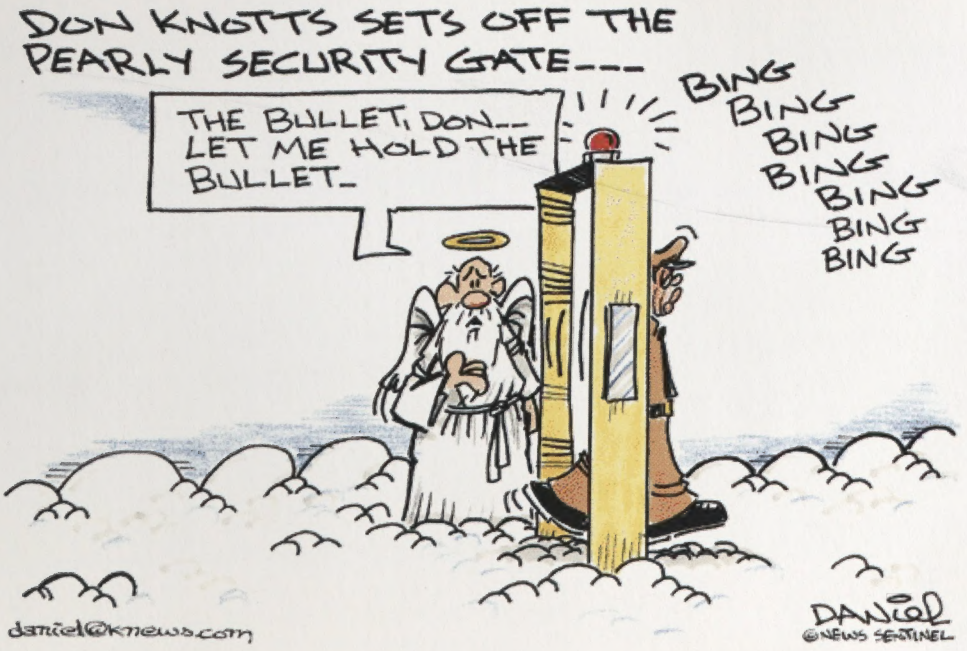
How your finger speaks to me. I reverse
your hands for all to see, the quick and the dead
brazing in our touch as I rub the old injury
you thought so ugly, hoping that finger,
engraved and blunt, will show me what to do now.

Marianne Worthington teaches communication studies at the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Kentucky, and creative writing for the Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts. Her poetry chapbook, *Larger Bodies Than Mine*, has recently been published by Finishing Line Press.

BLOOMERS

The etymology of the word *sign* is traced from Middle English (*signe*) through Old French to Latin (*signum*: mark, token, image, sign, and seal). Contemporary America is awash in these visual marks, especially those tailored to the traveling public. Regional and nationally-known companies in particular spend serious monies to create and reinforce these visual identities.

Fortunately, the American landscape is still open to signs that surprise and delight us – signs like the one (pictured above) we recently found in Bristol, Tennessee. If you have a favorite sign, humorous, beautiful, or just plain odd, photograph it and send it to us (as a .jpeg or .pdf email attachment) along with a 50-words-or-less explanation of where the sign is located and why you love it. We just might include your favorite sign in a future issue of *Now & Then*. Send it to: sauceman@etsu.edu


DON KNOTTS SETS OFF THE PEARLY SECURITY GATE---
THE BULLET, DON-- LET ME HOLD THE BULLET-
BING BING BING BING BING BING BING
daniel@knews.com
DANIEL
©NEWS SENTINEL

Jesse Donald Knotts was born in Morgantown, West Virginia, on July 21, 1924.
He died February 24, 2006, in Beverly Hills, California.

Cartoon courtesy Charles Daniel, Knoxville News-Sentinel.

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